

**MOTIVATION AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS
PARTICIPATION IN THE LIVES OF LATINO
IMMIGRANTS:
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF
GARDEN CITY AND SYRACUSE, KANSAS**

BY

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Katherine Jeanette Acosta**

**Submitted to the graduate degree program in
International Studies and the graduate faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the
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Chairperson*

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of the following thesis**

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Acknowledgments and Dedication

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I dedicate my Master's work to my mother and father, Yolanda Acosta and Jose Luis Acosta who sacrificed everything and emmigrated to the United States to provide my brothers and I a better quality of life. They worked relentlessly to provide us with many resources, one of which was the opportunity for a higher education, and for this, I am forever indebted. In the same way I dedicate this thesis to others like them, Latino immigrants in Western Kansas—who struggle and work relentlessly surviving in these small communities to provide their family with the opportunities they never had, all in search of the American Dream.

Abstract

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this ethnographic research examines motivation and the role of religious participation among Latino Evangelical immigrants in two cities in Kansas: Garden City and Syracuse. Interviews and surveys were utilized for data gathering to discover that religion and the congregation plays a fundamental role in the lives of both Garden City Evangelical Latino immigrants and to establish five common themes across congregations in Garden City and Syracuse:

1. Alienation of congregants,
2. The congregation as an immigrant support center,
3. The congregation as a surrogate family,
4. The pivotal role of religion, and
5. Meals as a venue for social interaction.

This study is significant, for it fills the current gap in the post-1965 religious immigrant congregation literature by geographically focusing this study on a new immigrant gateway and by systematically evaluating two comparable cities to test four main hypotheses.

Introduction

Hallé Un Buen Amigo (The Lilly of the Valley)

Hallé un buen amigo, mi amado Salvador, Contaré lo que El ha hecho para mí; Hallándome perdido e indigno pecador, Me salvó y hoy me guarda para sí. Me salva del pecado, me guarda de Satán: Promete estar conmigo hasta el fin; (¡Aleluya!) El consuela mi tristeza, me quita todo afán:

¡Grandes cosas Cristo ha hecho para mí!

Jesús jamás me falta, jamás me dejará, Es mi fuerte y poderoso protector; del mundo me separo y de la vanidad, Para consagrar mi vida al Señor. Si el mundo me persigue, si sufro tentación,

Confiado en Cristo puedo resistir; (¡Aleluya!) La victoria me es segura y elevo mi canción: ¡Grandes cosas Cristo ha hecho para mí!

Y sé que Jesucristo muy pronto volverá, Y entre tanto me prepara un hogar En la casa de mi Padre, mansión de luz y paz, Do el creyente fiel con El ha de morar; Llegándome a la gloria, ningún pesar tendré, Contemplaré su rostro siempre allí; (¡Aleluya!) Con los santos redimidos gozoso cantaré: ¡Grandes cosas Cristo ha hecho para mí!

Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida is a Spanish speaking, Evangelical Christian congregation that gathers in the basement of its English speaking, Baptist counterpart in Garden City, Kansas. Sparsely attended, yet vibrant and engaging, this church provides the spiritual lifeline to nearly 50 Latino families from around the Finney County. One fall morning nearly two years ago, I sat quietly among the participants and sang the lyrics of *Hallé un Buen Amigo*. Despite the fact that my parents are active leaders of this church, it was only my second visit and I spent little time listening to the pastor's sermon that morning. Instead, over the duration of an hour and a half, I took in the sights and sounds of the other Latino worshippers wondering if they, too, shared my family's immigrant experience.

In 1991 my family packed everything we owned into five suitcases and picked up our long standing roots to move to the United States of America from our beloved home of Lima, Perú. For too long in Lima my parents worried about the political strife, economic unbalance and lack of educational benefits in Perú. They believed that our own country's borders could not provide a stable environment to raise a successful family. My parents sacrificed our cultural heritage to give us new opportunities and hope for a better way of life. Their monumental decision relocated us to a small town in western Kansas where my dad's sister lived with her husband and two children.

My experience growing up in Syracuse, Kansas—a small, rural community in Hamilton County—was a drastic change from the fast-paced lifestyle of the capitol of Perú and the strict rules of the private, Catholic school that I used to attend. I was the first English as a Second Language (ESL) student in the USD 494 Hamilton County school system, and one of only a handful of students who identified as Hispanic or Latino in Syracuse. As a ten year old I had no choice but to assimilate into an “English only” classroom. Fortunately, I was young and being surrounded by a new language and culture came easier to me than to most other children, and I was able to transition into the English curriculum in two short months. My parents, however, found the harsh realities of overcoming cultural and language barriers to be a difficult challenge that they still face today.

My parents' challenge of living in a foreign country was quickly eased, however, when they began to attend *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* and formed friendships with other Spanish-speaking families in their community. My parents had not always been religious, mind you. Nor had they ever associated with the Evangelical movement prior to living in western Kansas. I do not remember ever going to church during my childhood years in Perú outside of accompanying my parents to customary funerals and weddings. The only religious photograph they owned was of their own Catholic wedding in 1981. It my personal experience that drew me, while an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas, to the study of the emergence of Latino immigrants in small towns in Kansas, and now as a graduate student to extend this study to the role that religion plays in the lives of these Latino immigrants.

Previous Research in Hamilton County, Kansas

As an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to conduct research in Hamilton County with a grant from the University of Kansas McNair Scholars Program in the summers of 2003 and 2004. I exclusively wanted to understand the Latino immigrant experience in the region where I grew up and where my family currently lives. I focused my research on immigrants' perception of how they felt they were treated within their community. In the summer of 2003, under the guidance of Sandra Albrecht, Professor of sociology at the University of Kansas, and in the summer of 2004

under the guidance of Donald Stull, professor of anthropology at the University of Kansas, a total of 53 Hamilton County residents were interviewed. In 2003, I interviewed ten Latino immigrant families consisting of a working or stay-at-home mother, a working father and a youth enrolled in high school (total of 30 people). In 2004, I interviewed nine Anglo high school students, three high school teachers, two ESL teachers, the principal and superintendent, two Hamilton County Hospital employees, a feedlot employee, two representatives from the Hamilton County Police Department, one representative from the Hamilton County Courthouse and the Hamilton County Family Literacy Organizer (total of 23 people).

Collectively, my previous research revealed feelings of hostility between Anglos and Latinos. There are many misinterpretations regarding culture, language and customs that escalated to various graffiti sightings around this small community. In early May of 2004, the Latino population of Syracuse was appalled to find “Go back to fucking Mexico you *beaners*” and “We don’t want more Mexicans” spray-painted on various dumpsters around the community and on a bowling alley wall located on Main Street. Although the graffiti was most likely the effort of a small number of people, for the most part, the interviewees overwhelmingly expressed that they felt a discontent for the Latino presence in their small community. For example, a Latino participant explained that Anglos experienced much frustration due to the participants’ lack of English language skills:

Sometimes I feel the gringos are racist; it has a lot to do with the language, I try and they get frustrated. I know I don't speak well but I try. They look at me as if I am up to no good. I am not doing anything, I'm just silent. Some just want to get rid of us because we are a little different (Interviewee, May 2003).

Music was an additional issue that created conflict in Syracuse; one participant described receiving many police warnings due to the high volume levels of his stereo. He explained that this is the way you should listen to “your” music, “loud and for all to hear”, and that the Anglos are just being hateful because they hate Mexican music and culture. This was explained to have been a significant issue for many years and occurred not only with music in automobiles, but also during house parties. As a result, during the summer of 2004 a series of opinion letters were printed in the *Syracuse Journal*, the county newspaper, which described Latinos who blast their music as unruly, disrespectful and ungrateful citizens. Because of these encounters, Latino immigrants and Anglo relationships suffered tremendously.

The hostility not only transpired between the Latino and Anglo populations; it also occurred amongst the Latinos in the community. More established Latinos and newly arrived Latinos described mixed feelings about each other. However, my interviews consistently revealed that it was primarily the more established Latino population that expressed frustration with the high number of new Latinos in their small community. For example, one established Latino stated, “There’s too many Hispanics now; before it was ok, we were a little different but they [Anglos] were curious, now they are sick of

all of them, there's just too many Hispanics" (Interviewee, May 2003). Additionally, an interviewee who had resided in Syracuse for 16 years expressed a new sense of racism floating in the community and claimed that this was a result of the large number of new wave Latino immigrants arriving to work in Syracuse's feedlots and dairies.

These conflicts also carried over into the Hamilton County school system. Latino teenagers were not being fully integrated into the school system, partly due to the format in which the English as a Second Language Program (ESLP) was organized in USD 494. ESL students are separated from the regular classroom curriculum and are placed in a separate classroom all day, which results in a lack of interaction between ESL and non-ESL students. The interviewed Latino students described experiencing conflicts with Anglo teachers and students regarding the quality and amount of work completed in the ESLP. Anglo interviewees alike described that it was their impression that ESL students had an easier curriculum. For example, an Anglo student explained:

Sometimes the teachers will send ESL students to their classroom to just play and mess around and not to do class work, they don't really need the help, I have walked by and I have seen them in there messing around, it makes me pissed that I have to do the work (Interviewee, June 2004).

Most students interviewed were affirmative about the separation the program created between ESL and non-ESL students in the school. Additionally, an interviewee explained that during lunch the separation continued since there

was an assigned table specifically for ESL students to sit together. However, the separation that occurred may not solely be a result ESLP. Other possibilities may have contributed, such as language barriers, cultural differences, or that most ESL students had classes exclusively with each other, thus friendships were formed.

As a result of my previous findings, I concluded that established and newly arrived Latino immigrants of Hamilton County had minimal interaction and were estranged from the rest of the Hamilton County community. This feeling of alienation is what I believe drives Latino immigrants to actively participate in religious Spanish congregations. Somewhere in the process between arriving to the United States and now, I suspect, that my parents and other Latino immigrants in Western Kansas decided to join and enthusiastically participate in Spanish language community churches in attempts to possibly fill the void of interaction and lack of a social outlet in the small communities of Western Kansas.

The purpose of this research is to explore the motivators that have attracted Latino immigrants, like my parents, to utilize the church as an outlet for interaction in the segregated communities of Syracuse and Garden City. In Chapter 1, I discuss the current literature of Post-1965 Immigrant congregations of the United States, and demonstrate how my research fills a necessary gap in the scholarly work. In Chapter 2, I provide a description and brief history of Latino immigration in the research sites of Syracuse and

Garden City, Kansas. In Chapter 3, I speak to the methodology utilized in this study as well as what I expect to find in the data. In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed description of the history, organization, and atmosphere of each congregation. In Chapter 5, I present recurring themes found in the interviews of congregants of Garden City and Syracuse. Finally, in Chapter 6, I present my findings, followed by my limitations and conclusions to the research in Chapter 7.

Chapter One

Post-1965 Immigrants and Religion

Since the inception of the United States, religion has been at the forefront of immigrant's lives. Over the course of U.S. history, immigrants have arrived in two significant waves. The first of these major waves began in 1880 and lasted until 1920. During this time the U.S. absorbed approximately 24 million immigrants. Most of the immigrants who arrived into the U.S. migrated from southern and eastern Europe (Waters and Jiménez 2005). During this time researchers became interested in understanding the immigrant experience, specifically focusing their research on the immigrant's use of religion.

The second wave of immigration into the United States came in the late 1980s and is still taking place. Currently:

The United States is in the midst of a wave of unprecedented immigration. Immigrants comprised 11.1 percent of the U.S. population in 2000. During the 1990s alone, the foreign-born population grew by 11.3 million, or 57.4 percent, bringing the Census 2000 count of immigrants to 31.1 million (Singer 2004:2).

Comparatively, the numbers of the second wave greatly surpass that of the first wave of southern and eastern Europeans. By the end of the 20st century, 23% of the population of the United States, or 34.2 million people, was either foreign-born or a second generation immigrant (Waters and Jiménez 2005). Most immigrants in this wave traveled to the United States from Latin American countries, with Mexico providing the highest influx. With this new

wave, social scientists continued to explore how religion influenced the lives of immigrants and most recently, how it played a role in the post-1965 generation (Cadge and Ecklund 2006, 2007; Cochrane 2006; Cook 2000; Dorsey 2000; Ebaugh 2003; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Hirschman 2004; Levitt 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; Menjívar 2003; Sullivan 2000; Warner 1998; Yang and Ebaugh 2001).

Particularly, a number of scholars have narrowed their focus to single ethnic congregations, making much of the work descriptive. For example, Cook (2000) illustrated the formation and composition of *Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica* in Harris County, Texas, where the congregation is comprised almost of all Argentinean immigrants. Similarly, Sullivan (2000) depicted *Iglesia de Dios*, an Evangelical congregation in Houston, Texas. He described the weekly activities, church structure, membership characteristics, and social activities. However, due to an abundance of descriptive scholarly case studies, Cadge and Ecklund (2007) suggest a move away toward a more analytical perspective. The strength of descriptive research is inherent in the profuse detail regarding a single congregation, yet its limitation lies in the lack of analytical comparison that would allow researchers the data needed to generalize findings in comparable settings.

In an attempt to move away from descriptive research, Ebaugh and Yang (2001) explored the institutional alterations that religious communities endure in the United States. They studied 13 different ethnic congregations in

Houston, Texas as a part of the Religion, Ethnicity, and New Immigrant Research (RENIR) Project. Their fieldwork findings confirmed a series of structural congregation changes that alluded to the Americanization of immigrants' religions and congregations in the United States. For example, they report that "Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Zoroastrians increasingly gathered on Sunday rather than on their traditional day of worship" (2001:277). Similarly, they found that in general, all congregations converted to providing additional social services, theme-based religious services, counseling, day-care during worship, and social activities much like the typical American congregations. Ebaugh and Yang (2001) present these *transformations after transplantation* as the findings to confirm the process of Americanization of immigrant religions.

Furthermore, Hagan and Ebaugh (2003) explored the role that religion played in indigenous Mayas decision to migrate to the United States. They completed a study of Mayas on both sides of the border, in their homeland as well as post-immigration in Houston, Texas. Their findings report that the transnational community's utilization of religion was crucial to their decision of when to migrate, their preparation for the trip, the journey, their arrival, the church development in Houston, Texas and the development of transnational linkages. Their respondents express the necessity of prayer and *ayunos* (fasting) before, during, and after the migration process. In addition to prayer at home, travelers attend *Alabanzas con Dios*, "a time of praise and

worship during which the spirit of God is experienced by the attendees” (2003:151). This ritual is fundamental to the journey of Mayans, a presiding pastor interviewed explained:

Lots of young people attend months in advance of contemplating a journey north. When God tells me that the journey will be a safe one, they proceed with their plans. If God tells me their journey will not be a safe one, they postpone or cancel their migration plans (2003:152).

Upon arriving in the United States they continue to use prayer and worship in attempts to construct a new congregation and to find funds to bring relatives and pastors from Guatemala to the United States.

Similarly, Levitt (2004) explores the transnational aspects of religions in the United States. For instance, in what encompasses several different ethnographic studies, she extensively explores the lives of five immigrant communities in the Boston Metropolitan area and their connections to Pakistan, the Dominican Republic, India, and Brazil. She finds in all of these cases that, by belonging to religious communities, transnational immigrants are able to create a place for themselves in the United States all the while remaining connected to their homeland. For example:

Jitubhai, who supervises Swadhayaya activities in the University town of Vidyanagar, said he is in close touch with many former students who now live in the United States. If he hears that someone has a family or financial difficulties, he calls one of the other Motobhais and asks them to intervene on his behalf (2004:12).

Therefore, the immigrants have a religious leader who still guides them from home. These leaders remain significantly invested in their lives, and regularly pray for them even if after immigration.

A further particularly interesting occurrence of religious transnationalism that Levitt (2001 and 2007) portrays is seen in the case of the Miraflores in Boston, Massachusetts. The predominantly Catholic community films the Sunday mass service held in the United States and later broadcasts it on a local television channel in Miraflores, Dominican Republic. In this manner Miraflores are able to absorb the same teachings as their U.S. relatives as well as watch them as they live their religious lives in the United States.

Another way that immigrants connect their new lives in the United States to their home societies is by passing their cultural heritage to their U.S. born children. Levitt (2003) portrays how Haitian immigrants in New York utilize shrines to extend the boundaries of Cuba. They take transnationalism to another level by ceremonially presenting their American newborns in these U.S. shrines to be formally transformed into imagined Cubans. Levitt (2006) claims that it is these described transnational immigrants, who are able to function across borders by being bicultural and bilingual that have the “best resume” for today’s global world.

Bankston III and Zhou (1995 and 1996) also explore the relationship between religious participation and ethnic identification as well as the role it

plays in social adaptation. In a series of surveys and interviews with young Vietnamese Americans in New Orleans, Louisiana they concur with Smith (1978) that “religious convictions rooted in ethnic religions, have helped groups adapt to American life and achieve upward mobility” (1995:524). Upward mobility for Vietnamese students in New Orleans was measured by grades in school, disassociation with drugs and alcohol and future educational goals. Bankston and Zhou (1995 and 1996) found that the student’s religious organizations were promoting these positive educational indicators of upward mobility. Therefore, they concluded that the Vietnamese students were not only maintaining their cultural heritage by practicing in their ethnic religious congregation in New Orleans, they were also utilizing the values gained from the religious teachings to achieve upward mobility in the United States.

In response to the lack of quantitative methods used in studying immigrant religions, some researchers have begun to use systematic analysis to compare immigrant populations. The most common method of approach is survey work. For instance, Cadge and Ecklund (2006) used systematic cross-sectional survey data using the New Immigrant Survey-Pilot to observe how demographic, family, employment, language, and migration factors into the lives of recently arrived documented immigrants. Their findings lead to a preliminary conclusion that associated higher church attendance with higher social immigrant incorporation. Cross-sectional survey is valuable because it allows for the duplicability of research in other locations.

Similarly, Tubergen (2006) used a collection of 20 surveys from eight Western countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States) to examine religious affiliation and participation. In order to test a sequence of twelve hypotheses Tubergen standardized and combined the surveys into a single cross-national data. The most significant finding of the study was revealed when countries were compared and the data showed that unlike what general population studies have claimed, immigrant men more frequently attended religious services when compared to women. However, researchers (Cadge and Ecklund 2006; Tubergen 2006) claim additional systematic analysis of the role social services play in people's choice to participate in a religious organization is essential. Most recently, Cadge and Ecklund (2007) reviewed scholarly work on religion and re-asserted a need for supplementary quantitative research of post-1965 immigrant's religious congregations in the United States.

Cadge and Ecklund (2007) also expressed a need for additional comparative studies similar to those provided by Menjívar (2003). Menjívar (2003) compared the same immigrant group in three different locations in the United States and exposed the significance of the comparative perspective. Focusing the study on recently arrived Salvadorians in San Francisco, Washington D.C., and Phoenix, Menjívar (2003) was able to evaluate two types of congregations: Evangelical Christians and Catholics. Menjívar argues that "this approach permitted us to hold constant certain factors and examine

the effects of those that vary; it also allowed us to bridge insights gained from recent scholarship in the field of religion and immigration with those from immigration research more generally” (2003:22). Her interpretations claimed that religious facilities play a crucial role in the everyday lives of Salvadoran immigrants in the three cities equally. This was most evidently seen in the ways in which the immigrants utilized the church services. For example, Ramón—a member of a Catholic church in Washington—stated:

We are the church of the poor, of the needy, so the church does not have the economic resources to carry out its mission fully. We need to be congregated as a community to be able to solve our problems. If we live in a community and try to solve our problems as a community, we’ll do much better (2003:34).

Therefore, through this example, it is evident that the function the church performs takes the role of an extended family and members consider the congregation in times of need and in times of joy.

Cao (2005) is a leading scholar who attempts to fill the gap in academic work concerning immigrants who become religious converts after arriving in the United States. She explored the role of religion in the lives of Chinese youth converts in New York’s Chinatown. Through observations, interviews, and small group meetings, Cao’s findings showed that religion played an everyday crucial role in the lives of the immigrant Chinese youth and successfully diverted them away from gangs and other negative groups that non-Christian youth in New York’s Chinatown were involved. In addition, the

church provided a space for affection that the youth were not receiving from their families. For instance, a respondent claimed:

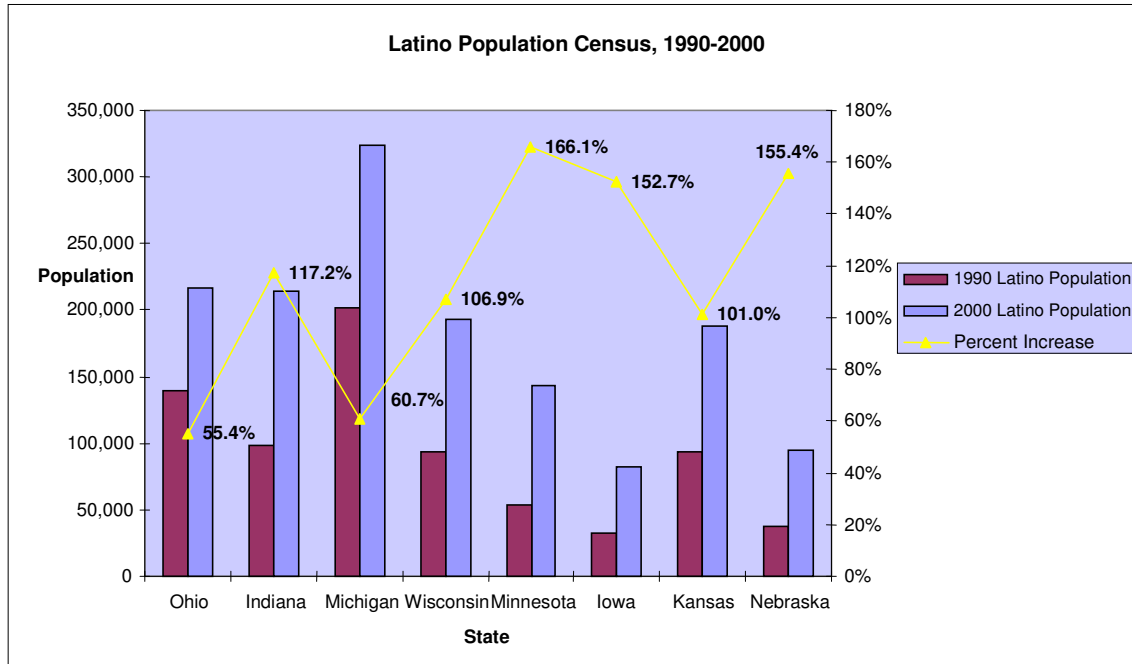
Praise is like when a father comes home and once he opens the door, all his children run to him and hug him; they hold on tight to him, hang on to his arms and legs and they keep saying “Daddy, I love you; Daddy, you’re the best” and they kiss him. In Chinese culture we often do not do this. But it should be a natural reaction to celebrate God’s presence in our lives. We simply shout out our adoration to Him without explaining reasons or justifications for why we would mush Him with our love. Just think of a time that any of you ever had a nice hug from a little child. They simply do it because of who they see us as. So we must be like children and adore God because of who He simply is (2005:196).

Therefore in the physical absence of family the church acts as a surrogate family to these youth in a foreign land, and similarly, it fulfilled the youths’ emotional needs when they were not met by present family members due to the cultural differences.

With the exception of Campion (2003), studies have neglected to explore immigrant religious congregations in new immigrant gateways. Campion (2003) observed and interviewed a congregation in Portville, a rural city in southern Louisiana, who in the past 5 years experienced a high volume of Spanish speaking immigrants due to job opportunities in the offshore industry. For several reasons, new immigrant gateways alike to Portville, Louisiana, continue to attract immigrants from all over the world, creating culturally rich communities.

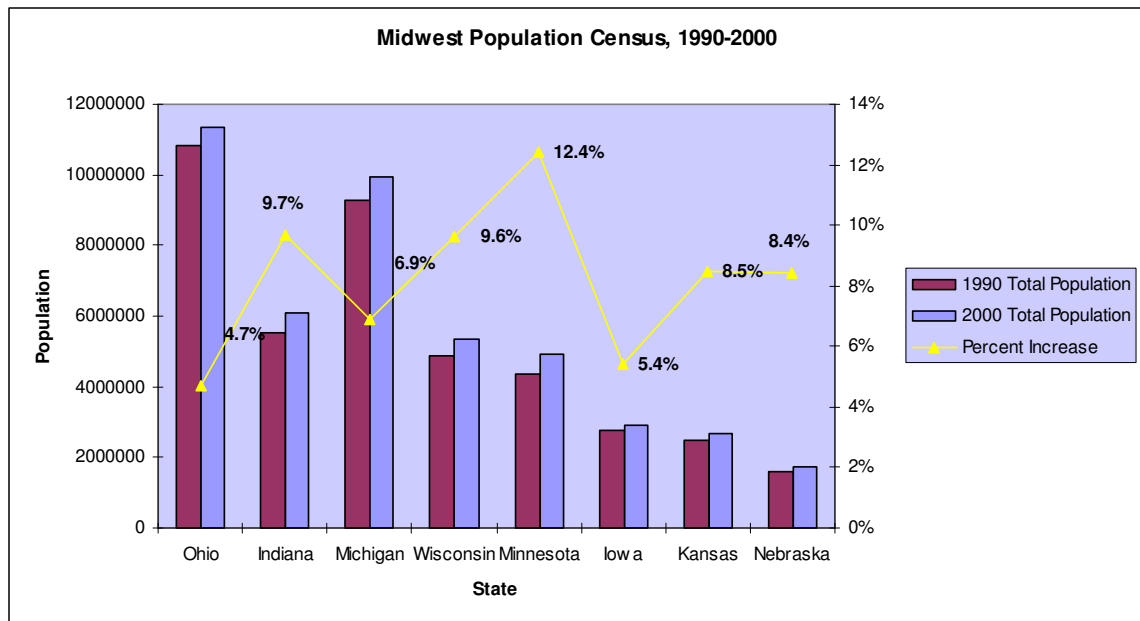
New Immigrant Gateways

Table 1 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000)



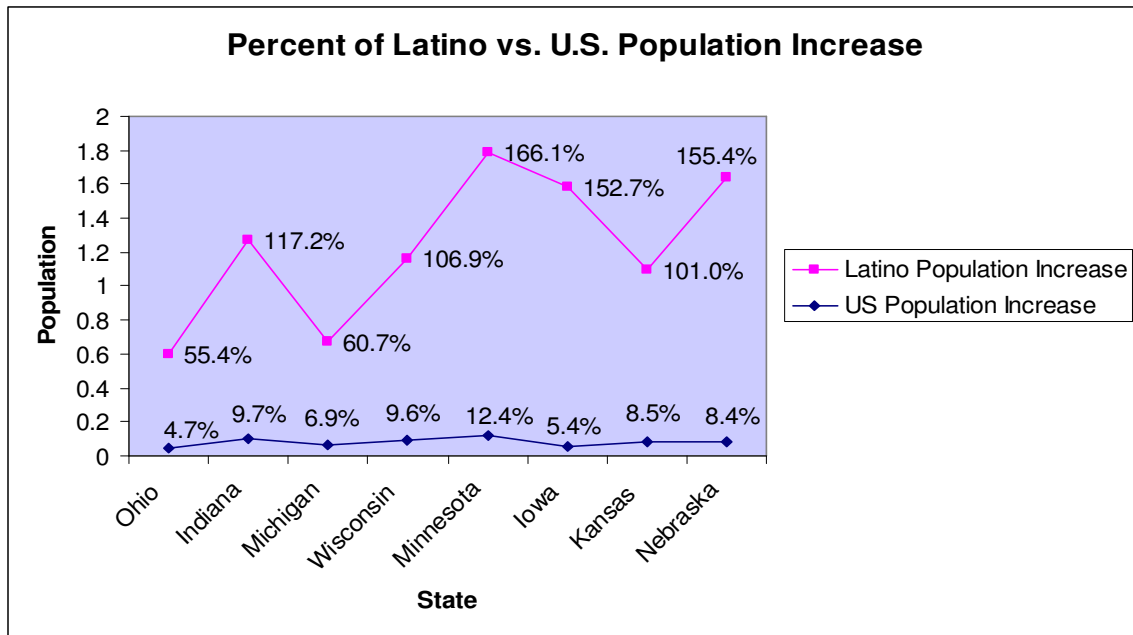
Urban areas on the East and West coasts are not the only multicultural communities in the United States. Small communities in the Midwest have also become sites of increasing cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Millard and Chapa (2004) discussed that “while Latinos have resided in parts of the rural Midwest for more than a century, the 1990s brought a great increase in the numbers of Latinos and in the number of rural areas with noticeable Latino populations” (2004:9). The Midwest, comprised of the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska experienced a noteworthy rise in their total Latino populations from 1990 to 2000 (See Table 1).

Table 2 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000)



The population increase in these Midwestern states was predominantly due to immigration from Central and South American countries. The large percentage of Latinos entering in these new areas was a result of the exhausted resources and high cost of living immigrants found in traditional gateways (See Table 2 and Table 3). The communities of the new gateways, particularly the Midwestern states, provided immigrants an abundance of unskilled labor and a reduced cost of living that may have made their financial transition into a foreign country easier than their traditional gateway counterparts. For these reasons, Midwestern states have continued to become increasingly diverse areas attracting newcomers and their families. Many scholars are increasingly becoming interested in studying these geographic areas experiencing high immigrant populations.

Table 3 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000)



Water and Jiménez (2005) argue that “A small but growing body of sociological literature examines the immigrant experience in these new gateways. The bulk of this research documents the changing geography of immigrant settlement and explains why there has been a change in immigrant settlement during the 1990s (Camarota & Keeley 2001; Durand et al. 2000; Gouveia & Saenz 2000; Gozdziaik & Martin 2005; Johnson et al. 1999; Kandel & Cromartie 2004, Kandel & Parrado 2005a, Massey et al. 2002, Singer 2004)” (2005:113). However, social scientists have yet to explore immigrant religious congregations in the Midwestern states.

As scholars have noted, “Empirically, it is time to move away from city-based studies in traditional gateways and look at the transformation of the South, the Midwest, and small cities, towns and rural areas, and suburban

areas as sites of first settlement” (Waters and Jiménez 2005:107). In order to further our understanding of immigrant religious congregations there is a great need to understand the case occurring in the Midwest. This research is significant because it attempts to fill this gap in the post-1965 immigrant literature of the role and motivations for religious participation of Latino immigrants in new gateways of the United States.

Additionally, this work is noteworthy as it quantifies independent variables like demographics and immigrations status which as Cadge and Ecklund (2007) have asserted are “rarely systematically measured as influences that shape immigrants’ religious beliefs, practices and affiliations,” except Van Tubergen 2006, Yang and Ebaugh 2001 (2007:360). Furthermore, this study is valuable because it provides tight analytical comparisons of religious organizations. Cadge and Ecklund (2007) explain that “Rather than focusing on one city, for example, comparisons across different U.S. cities between immigrants from the same country who share a religious tradition” could add substantial knowledge to the work of ethnic congregations (2007:370). Finally, the significance of this research is heightened because few studies in social science are performed by immigrant scholars.

Chapter Two

Introduction of Research Sites

Fieldwork Site: Syracuse, Kansas

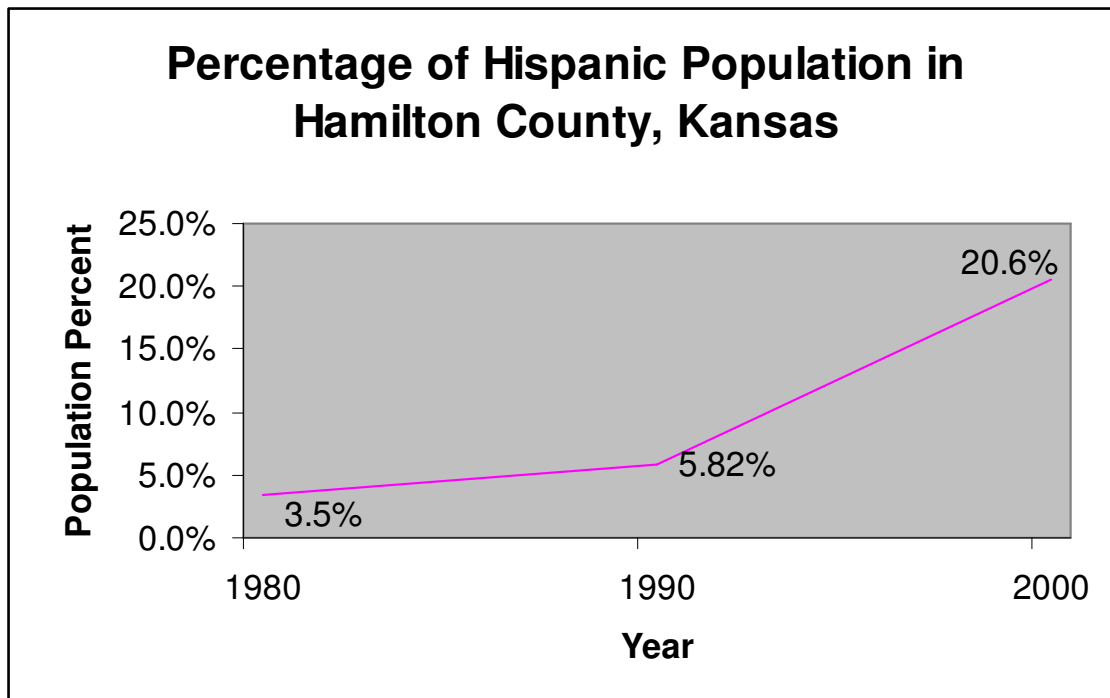
The city of Syracuse is located in Southwestern Kansas and was selected as a research site because it is an excellent case in point of a region that has experienced a significant increase in Latino immigrant populations. Founded in 1873, Syracuse began as a water tank and a railroad side track. The city resides along the Arkansas River, making it an area that is fruitful to wheat, hay, corn, and milo. Additionally, Syracuse is reinforced with a variety of feedlots and dairies. These agriculture and cattle industries have made the area prosperous, along with supplying an assortment of employment opportunities for the inhabitants who decide to settle there (Norton 1998).

Syracuse, along with Coolidge and Kendall, are the cities that compose Hamilton County. Syracuse is significantly larger than the other cities, housing 1,824 of the 2,670 people, or 68.3 %, who reside in Hamilton County. Additionally, Syracuse currently holds the county seat and houses the only grocery store, motel, restaurants, police department, hospital, gasoline station, movie theater, bowling alley, lumber store and school system in the area (Norton 1998). Residents of Coolidge and Kendall regularly travel to Syracuse in order to purchase items (i.e. fuel), to attend school, and to bowl or go to the movies. These facilities combined with employment opportunities, make Syracuse a prime location for immigrant settlements.

As traditional gateways became exhausted, the job opportunities available in

cities like Syracuse contributed greatly to the rise of Latino immigrants in Kansas. From 1990 to 2000 the percentage of Latinos in Hamilton County nearly quadrupled (refer to Table 4).

Table 4 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000)



These large immigrant populations transformed the demographics of the primarily Anglo community of Hamilton County. For this reason, the largest city in the county, Syracuse, is an ideal location for the investigation of post-1965 immigrant religious congregations in new immigrant gateways.

Fieldwork Site: Garden City, Kansas

Garden City is located in Southwest Kansas and was selected as a research site because of the rising numbers of Latino immigrant populations who reside there. Founded in 1884, Garden City continues to be the county

seat of Finney County, which is the second largest land area county in Kansas. Garden City is the largest city in Finney County, housing 28,451 of the 40,523 residents in the County.

Garden City is rich in wheat, corn, milo, soybeans, sunflowers, alfalfa making it an ideal location for farming and ranching. The agricultural jobs created by this industry have attracted many incoming immigrants from all over the world. Most recently, Tyson, a large beef packing plant located in Holcomb, KS, seven miles west of Garden City, has created an abundance of jobs drawing more and more Latino immigrants to the area. In addition, Garden City has an abundance of restaurants, ethnic stores, movie theaters, clothing stores, bowling alleys, bars, and is home to the only Super Wal-Mart in the area.

Because of these job opportunities and resources the city has to offer, Garden City's Latino population has nearly doubled, skyrocketing from 6,092 in 1990 to 12,492 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000). Latinos are currently 43.9% of the population and their numbers continue to rise. This rising number of incoming Latino immigrants in Garden City, a new gateway, make it a prime location for this comparative study of the religious participation of Latino immigrants.

Chapter Three

Hypothesis and Methodology

Chong (1998) found that Korean Americans were motivated to participate in a Christian Church due to the feeling of marginalization they experienced from the greater society. Religious congregations often fill the void of needed assistance that immigrants would generally get from extended families in the homeland. Given these findings, and the conclusions of my previous case study of Hamilton County (Acosta 2003 and 2004) that depicted a spatial and cultural isolation of Latinos in Syracuse, Kansas; it is hypothesized that Latino immigrants in both Syracuse and Garden City will claim that feelings of isolation is a motivator for joining the Evangelical church (H1).

In addition, Hirschman (2004) explains that immigrants experience a feeling of loss in foreign lands and these feelings are often mended by participation in religious activities of the past, which provide an emotional connection to the lost and the new homeland. As a result of these feelings in an unfamiliar new land, immigrants tend to gravitate to the familiar. Therefore, it is hypothesized that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse and Garden City who claimed a strong affiliation with a religion prior to immigration will continue to affiliate strongly with that religion post immigration (H2).

A study of Pentecostal Ghanaians in Chicago (Stevens 2004) explains that the “goal of the ethnic church is to provide a safe and comfortable social

space for new immigrants and this becomes more and more irrelevant once immigrant communities become significantly acculturated” (2004:123). Correspondingly, Cadge and Ecklund (2006) found a correlation between attendance and immigrant integration and claimed that the less integrated migrants are to American culture the more likely they are to depend on religious congregations for a community. Therefore, in view of these findings and given previous findings (Acosta 2003 and 2004) which demonstrated that Syracuse, Kansas is a small community with few to no resources for Latino immigrants (example: ethnic stores) and minimal to no interaction with the rest of the community, it is hypothesized that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse will attend church more often and regularly than Latino Evangelical Christians in Garden City, Kansas, who live in a larger city and have more access to resources (H3).

Smith (1978) explains that the feelings of displacement that a traveler experiences during the process of immigration are in itself a “theologizing experience.” He explains that in a time of uncertainty and estrangement immigrants often turn to religion in search of belonging. Given these findings, it is hypothesized that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse and Garden City, Kansas who did not affiliate with a religion in past, will do so post-immigration (H4).

Methodology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

When deciding the methodological approach to pursue for this

research, both qualitative and quantitative angles were considered. Qualitative research allows one “to study selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail,” however many researchers consider these findings to be soft in terms of scientific research (Patton 1987:9). Benefits of quantitative research were also reviewed, and it was apparent that the great value in this method lies in the concreteness of the data and the significance of the replicable methods that one can achieve with this approach. In addition “quantitative research facilitates the understanding of a phenomenon at the macro level...” (Maeda 2005:81). After extensive consideration on both research types, a mixed method approach was selected for this research, “mixed methods addresses the weakness of quantitative and qualitative research methods and improves the reliability of data” (Maeda 2005:85). By employing the most successful practices of each approach the limitations of each method was minimized.

Surveys (quantitative research) and in-depth interviews (qualitative research) were used to measure four hypotheses. Scholars have also employed surveys as a method when conducting similar ethnographic research studies. Bryman (1988) explained that:

One of the contexts in which quantitative and qualitative research are most frequently united is where an ethnographer carries out a survey in order to fill some gaps in his or her knowledge of a community group... because the gaps cannot be readily filled by a reliance on participant observation or unstructured interviewing alone (1988:137).

Therefore, in-depth interviews were conducted in hopes to minimize gaps in the data gathered through surveys.

Snowball sampling was utilized to select the Spanish congregations in Garden City, Kansas. *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, the initial congregation selected, was made available thanks to my parents' membership in the church as well as my acquaintance with the pastor. The pastor of *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* then referred the pastor of *Primera Iglesia de Nazareno* (First Church of the Nazarene) a congregation he believed would be willing to participate in this research.

Prior to beginning fieldwork for this study, the intention was to utilize two congregations in each research site. In January of 2008, Syracuse had three active Evangelical churches within the city limits. Much like Garden City, snowball sampling was to be utilized for the church selection in Syracuse; however, many changes occurred within the congregations that did not permit the use of this method. After initial contact with the pastor of each congregation notification came that one of the Spanish congregations in Syracuse had dismantled due to a family conflict which resulted in the resignation of the pastor. After arriving to the research site I was taken back to find that due to low attendance numbers, the remaining two churches decided to unite and form one congregation. Following this transition, the pastor of the second church abruptly moved his family to a different city in Kansas. Therefore, in the span of two months, Syracuse transitioned from

having three Spanish Evangelical congregations with three Spanish speaking pastors, to a single congregation and one Spanish speaking pastor. Therefore, one congregation, *Mission Bautista Del Sur* (Baptist Mission of the South), was studied in Syracuse and two, *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* and *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*, were studied in Garden city.

Surveys were distributed immediately after the Sunday Service to all willing participants, 18 years of age or older, who were present on the day of fieldwork in the selected Evangelical congregation of Syracuse or Garden City, Kansas. Surveyed participants received a pencil to complete the survey and were read an information statement prior to beginning the survey. It was clearly explained that completion of the survey would certify their agreement of the information statement. Upon completion of the survey participants placed the survey in a marked box near the exit door.

The survey data was numerically coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis. A total of fifty-nine surveys were collected at both research locations, however, three surveys from Garden City congregations were not completed and had to be discarded, therefore, only the data of fifty-six surveys was considered in the analysis. A total of 46 Garden City surveys and 10 Syracuse surveys were analyzed for the comparative findings of this research.

Of the Garden City congregants, 54.3% surveyed identified as female and 45.7% identified as male. Of these participants surveyed, 78.3% reported being born outside of the United States, predominantly in Mexico (77.1%,

refer to Table 5). Of these immigrants, 65% reported that they had lived in the United States for at least 15 years. Similarly, 80% of the surveyed Syracuse congregants identified as female and 20% identified as male. The majority of the Syracuse sample was born outside of the United States, predominately in Mexico (66.7%). Sixty-seven percent of Syracuse respondents reported to have resided in the United States at least 12 years or less.

Table 5 Contingency Table of Place of Birth by City

			City		Total
			Garden City	Syracuse	
Place of Birth	Mexico	Count	27	6	33
		% within City	58.7%	60.0%	58.9%
	Peru	Count	3	2	5
		% within City	6.5%	20.0%	8.9%
	Cuba	Count	1	0	1
		% within City	2.2%	.0%	1.8%
	Belize	Count	1	0	1
		% within City	2.2%	.0%	1.8%
	Salvador	Count	2	0	2
		% within City	4.3%	.0%	3.6%
	Guatemala	Count	1	1	2
		% within City	2.2%	10.0%	3.6%
	United States of America	Count	11	1	12
		% within City	23.9%	10.0%	21.4%
Total	Count	46	10	56	
	% within City	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Foreign born Garden City congregants surveyed were split in equal parts between permanent residents and undocumented immigrants (19.6%, refer to Table 6). The majority of respondents from Syracuse (40%, refer to Table 6) reported an undocumented status in the United States. Finally,

household composition of congregants interviewed in Garden City was 67% married couples with 41% of respondents in families of 4 or more. In Syracuse 80% of the sample was married and 60% had a family 4 or more.

Table 6 Contingency Table of Legal Status by City

			City		Total
			Garden City	Syracuse	
U.S. Legal Status	Permanent Resident	Count	9	1	10
		% within City	19.6%	10.0%	17.9%
	Work visa	Count	2	2	4
		% within City	4.3%	20.0%	7.1%
	Undocumented	Count	9	4	13
		% within City	19.6%	40.0%	23.2%
	U.S. Citizen	Count	26	3	29
		% within City	56.5%	30.0%	51.8%
Total	Count	46	10	56	
	% within City	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

was guaranteed to all participants from the congregations, however, all three pastors gave consent to utilize their real names in this research study. Interviews were held in the location and time of convenience for each participant, some preferred the church, others preferred their home and some preferred to visit me at my parent's home. Interview times ranged from ten minutes to a little over an hour. Interviews were conducted in the participant's language of choice, English or Spanish. All interviews were tape recorded, and upon completion all interviews were translated and transcribed simultaneously.

A total of 20 congregants of Garden City and Syracuse were interviewed, as well as the pastor of each congregation (total of 23

interviewees). All interviews were conducted during the period of March 6-March 11, 2008. Pastor Richard Perez and a total of 10 congregants were interviewed from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida (Garden City)*, five men and five women. Of the 11 total interviews at *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, eight were completed in Spanish, two were completed in English, and one was conducted in both English and Spanish. The pastor and five congregants were interviewed from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno (Garden City)*, three women and two men. Of the 6 total interviews at *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*, three were conducted in Spanish, two were completed in English, and one was completed in both English and Spanish. Finally, the pastor and five congregants were interviewed from *Mission Bautista Del Sur (Syracuse)*, three women and two men. Of all six total interviews at *Mission Bautista del Sur*, four were conducted in Spanish and two were conducted in both English and Spanish.

Congregants interviewed derived from a range of nationalities. Thirteen of the participants were from Mexico; of these, six were from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, five were from *Mission Bautista Del Sur*, and two were from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*. Four of the total participants interviewed were from Guatemala; of these, three were from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*, and one was from *Mission Bautista Del Sur*. Three of the total participants interviewed were from Peru, all of which were from *Iglesia*

Bautista Nueva Vida. Two of the total participants interviewed were born in the United States, of these one participant was from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* and one was from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*. Finally, one participant of the total interviewees was from El Salvador and belonged to *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*.

The interview data was systematically analyzed as a whole by developing central themes in the interviews and frequencies in the surveys in order to test the four hypotheses proposed.

Chapter Four

A Detailed Look at Congregations

Garden City Congregation: *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*

I think that for a lot of our congregation's lives revolve around the church and church activities. Especially those who are in charge of a certain part of the church, they have made friends in the church and they are friends in and out of church. It all boils down to how often they come, if you were to survey how often do you come to church, those families that come to church often have friendships and deep roots within the church and they come often. So I would venture to say that most of their lives revolve around the church. Now for those who come seldom, they probably have other friends outside of the church who keep them busy and provide them with the fellowship that they would get at the church (Pastor Perez, March 2008).

Three years ago the phone rang at Pastor Richard Perez's house, his prayers had been answered. Fellowship Baptist Church leaders had optimistically accepted his proposal for a Spanish congregation in Garden City, Kansas. Although at that time Garden City had about ten other Spanish Evangelical congregations, Pastor Perez felt there was a need for an additional congregation. In addition, he was influenced by the request of a group of six families who had not found a church they loved in Garden City. He was convinced that he could create the right church for them; however, it wasn't until an English congregation provided him with the appropriate space that this dream became a reality.

Since that phone call, *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* has grown into a full fledged congregation of about 140 charter members. A variety of nationalities make up the congregation, Pastor Perez illustrates, “75% of our parishioners are Mexican nationals and another 20% would be Mexican-American... We also have a good demographic of Peruvians and we have folks from Cuba, Belize and folks from El Salvador” (March 2008). Although, the congregants derive from different nationalities they are joined by a pan-ethnic identity and a love for Christ.

The congregant’s English language acquisition varies by every person, however, all members speak fluent Spanish therefore pamphlets,

PowerPoint

presentations, and the services are almost always in Spanish.

However, given that the church shares building space with Fellowship Baptist



Front entrance of Fellowship Baptist Church.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

Church, pastors from both congregations sensed a need to create interaction between the members in the building as a whole. As a

result, the congregations now come together every three months for a bilingual service. “It’s really one of the highlights of the year” states

Pastor Perez:

We have music in both languages and we have preaching in both languages. I would either preach myself in English or Spanish simultaneously or Pastor Mike, since he does not speak Spanish, would preach and I would repeat what he said in Spanish (March 2008).

Although Pastor Perez would describe the bilingual events as a step in the “right direction”, he claims that some members of the Spanish church have expressed that they sensed racism from the Anglo congregants. Pastor Perez describes that often times the Spanish speaking congregants at the church feel intimidated in such settings.

He claims that this intimidation is primarily due to the large percentage of the parishioners he believes to be undocumented



Sunday service at *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

in the United States. Therefore, the purpose of these bilingual services is to begin ameliorating the existent feelings of mistrust and to create a commonality between the congregations. Pastor Perez hopes that these

bilingual services will someday be as successful as the intercultural youth groups held at the church building every Wednesday. Overwhelmingly, the Spanish youth speak English and Pastor Perez attributes the availability of communication to the newly created friendships across both congregations.

Pastor Perez prides himself in the expository teaching of the Bible, in other words, a verse by verse detailed study of the Bible. This style of preaching is what Pastor Perez



Back entrance of Fellowship Baptist Church.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

believes separates his congregation from the other congregations in Garden City. In addition, Pastor Perez claims that members are drawn in by the community of friends that is created at the church.

Generally, the congregation tries to meet once every two months to enjoy an informal meal and social gathering after the service. In addition, families are invited to congregant's homes or different locations around the community (restaurants, bowling alley, movie theater, etc.) for *compañerismo* (fellowship) once a month. These activities provide families with entertainment with fellow members outside of the premises of the church. Furthermore, the church offers

La Femenil (women's group) and *La Varonil* (men's group) once a month for gender exclusive fellowship.

Overall, the environment that *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* promotes is a laid back approach to praising the Lord. "I want to make clear that I want people that come in here and visit us to know that we accept them the way they are. If there are going to be any changes, God is going to make those changes" (Pastor Perez, March 2008). Lending to the pleasurable environment within the congregation are the celebrations and holidays held within the church building, at parks, or at a congregant's home. Most families like to celebrate birthdays, *Quinceañeras* (15th birthday), wedding anniversaries, Father's and Mother's day, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and New Years with at the church and with their friends from the congregations.

In addition, to the lighthearted social gatherings, church members and visitors enjoy the festive environment of Sunday services. During my visits, I observed many congregants dancing and praising with their hands during the music portion of the service. The *Banda* (band) consists of vocalist, a drummer, a pianist, and an acoustic and electric guitar player, who play modern songs in attempts to better connect with the congregants. Following the upbeat praise songs, the band changes the pace for songs of adoration to prepare the congregation for the sermon. Pastor Perez explains that the music

lends a hand in making the environment in the congregation very vibrant and concert like.

In addition to the sermons and social services, *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* offers assistance to needy families of Garden City:

We have a person that is on top of that and if word comes to his ear that there is a family in need financially we will just collect a spontaneous offering, our members give whatever they can to help their brothers and sisters in Christ (Pastor Perez, March 2008).

When those funds are not enough to cover the needs they often look to the mother church, Fellowship Baptist Church, for additional monetary aid. The funds collected are used to purchase food, are given directly to the person in need, or utilized to pay their rent, electric or gas bill.

Pastor Perez explains that the congregation is best described as a family away from home, a group of people you can rely on in times of need. Congregants not only rely on fellow members in monetary times of need, but also turn to the pastor and his wife for advice regarding marital problems, and parenting questions. Additionally, the non-English speaking congregants rely on the pastor and other English speaking members as interpreters in conversations with the school system, government agencies, billing services, and banks. Finally, the church is utilized by its members as a way of hearing about job openings and learning about health insurance and educational opportunities for their kids.

Garden City Congregation: *Prima Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Well I hope because they want a closer relationship with God, you know but I know that is not the only reason. We get a lot of the new people in town who just want to come for the food we sometimes have after the service or to try to get help, you know with money or with food. Actually that's probably how we get most people to come. They hear about us and then they show up on Sunday. I know that's why they come, they need help and they know that we will give it to them. It's usually after a few months that you know who are the ones here for good and the ones that just needed to get settled (Pastor Tuche, March 2008).

In 2006 *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* experienced tragedy, their pastor passed away unexpectedly of natural causes. At their current location, the congregation had only existed six years, the loss shocked people and as a result many members

went astray. It was at this time of uncertainty and need that Pastor Joel Tuche received a phone call which transported him from Amarillo, Texas to



Front Entrante of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

Southwest Kansas. This was Pastor Tuche's first position out of theology school, and he was aware of the challenges he would face with attendance, primarily due to the high number of people who left the congregation during

the transition period. However, Pastor Tuche described feeling eagerness and hoped to use the opportunity as a way to alter some of the traditional Nazarene customs he had learned about in theology school.

The first of these modifications, and the one that Pastor Tuche highly attributes to higher of attendance, is the use of technology during services. “Many have marked the Internet as diabolic due to a lack of knowledge,” explains Pastor Tuche. However, he is attempting to amend these misperceptions (March 2008). One way he does this is by utilizing visuals during the sermons. He projects PowerPoint presentations of the sermon’s message on a wall for the congregation to follow as he speaks. He also distributes the entire audible Bible in MP3 format for youth to listen to, “I told them listen, if you don’t want to read then at least listen, but those MP3s have a stigma like they are listening to bad music, but it’s the Bible!” (March 2008). Similarly, the church has moved away from giving adults of the congregation excess reading material and now distributes the past sermons on compact discs for members to study at their leisure at home. Pastor Tuche believes that the people of his congregation are more attracted to audible and visual messages and also believes that this interaction will keep his congregation up-to-date with technological advances.

On the other hand, although he presents modernity in the form of technology to his congregation, he remains grounded on the fundamentals of Evangelist movement. He worries that Spanish congregations of Garden City

suffer because they are not connected with the doctrine of the Bible and that congregations in Garden City are being transformed into social groups or clubs for gathering with other Latinos. “I want this to be a place where we can worship God not a place where we congregate to talk about our problems,” explains Pastor Tuche, “I focus on the youth, to try to get them involved so that they can change this for the future” (March 2008). In order to achieve this, the church created a select group of youth, named *Holy Crew*, and relies on them for many church responsibilities. For example, all *Holy Crew* members must be present two hours before each church service in order to set up for the event and must stay after for sometimes several hours in order to clean up the church building.

Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno takes pride in the variety of services it provides for its congregants of Garden City. They provide two Sunday services, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, which caters to people who work. “On Sunday mornings we get around 50-60 people that show up, but then we have a service at 6 P.M. and that’s the one that most people that work can make, so we get about 70 people” (Pastor Tuche, March 2008). In addition, they offer youth services on Wednesday and Friday nights that draws in youth from several locations in the Southwest Kansas area. The church also offers theology classes on Tuesdays and Sunday School for congregants wishing a deeper understanding of the Bible. Similar to *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, social gatherings are very popular among members.

They gather at the church or meet at a member's home to share meals and enjoy each other's company outside of the church building. The church also provides an extensive assistance program for needy people. They are able to supply their congregants and visitors with food, monetary offerings, clothes and furniture in times of need. Finally, a unique feature of the *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* is that they provide weekly Spanish language and Latin culture classes for English speakers. This program has served to connect the Anglo community, to dispel stereotypes and confusions about Latinos, and to educate the participants of the needs of the Latino people of Garden City. Although the program is relatively new, it has drawn in many business owners trying to tap into the Latino markets as well as Anglo Nazarene Church members eager to learn more about their sister congregation in Garden City.

The congregation's motto is *para ti y para todos* (For you and for everyone) is proudly displayed in front of the church and near the highway for people passing by to view. Pastor Tuche hopes



Front sign of *Iglesia Del Nazareno*.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

that this inviting sign will draw in Latinos who are “lonely and needing the Lord” (March 2008). Additionally, he hopes that the lively atmosphere at *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* will entice them to return. The church values

music as a form of praise, and spends a large portion of the Sunday mass enjoying the church band. Although Pastor Tucheze wishes that all visitors were attracted because they yearned for a closer relationship with God, however, he realizes that often times people attend because of the assistance services the church provides.

Although the congregants of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* derive from many Spanish speaking nations, Pastor Tucheze believes they are united by the commonality of the Spanish language and Christianity. They are also united by a passion for Christ and a literal translation and understanding of the Bible. Pastor Tucheze hopes to set his congregation apart from those which he believes lack organization:

They say let's just do and let's see how it comes out. There is a method of how to do things, there is a way it's not just, there are a lot of sermons that talk about topics, they read a verse about the Bible and then you talk about a topic and it's not a sermon anymore (Pastor Tucheze, March 2008).

Pastor Tucheze feels that his dedication to the tradition and the doctrine of the Nazarene church is what has drawn past members back and new members in. He hopes that his congregation can grow further together and gain back the momentum that they once had as the first Spanish language Nazarene Church in Southeast Kansas.

Syracuse Congregation: *Mission Bautista Del Sur*

There are many reasons as to why a person decides to go to church, but in my opinion the people live better when they attend church, spiritually and because they

get fellowship. People just feel good when they have fellowship with others. Also Christ joins them so the relationship is stronger. A lot of people here lately have decided to have a worldly community, they only have the nights off and so they participate in activities of the night, drinking, dancing, and drugs. The people go to Johnson City or Lamar to bars because they want to have fun, but it's fun without purpose, just to feel surrounded by people at that given time (Pastor Pinto, March 2008).

Six years ago, a group of leaders from *Primera Iglesia Bautista De Garden City*, an evangelical church in Garden City, sat and listened to the testimony of two families from Syracuse, Kansas. The families shared how they drove 45 minutes to attend church every Sunday. They expressed the need of a Spanish congregation in the City of Syracuse. The leaders of Garden City were aware of the growing number of Latinos in Syracuse and the lack of a stable Spanish Christian church within the community. Pastor Fredy Pinto was among these Garden City church leaders and claims that during this conversation he felt a calling from God to spread the mission of the Lord in the small community of Syracuse. Pastor Pinto's decision to start a congregation in Syracuse was received with much support from *Primera Iglesia Bautista De Garden City*. In only a few months after the initial testimony, Pastor Pinto had purchased a home and moved his family to Syracuse. Following what encompassed several arrangements and strategy meetings with the Anglo Southern Baptist Church of Syracuse

the project was finalized in August of 2003, and *Mission Bautista Del Sur* began to meet regularly.

The members of *Mission Bautista Del Sur* are described by Pastor Pinto to be joined by their love for Christ. Congregants who attend Sunday service actively utilize the Bible during the duration of the 90 minute service. In addition, they are treated to adoration songs by the church's singing group and often, lunch and refreshments follow the service. Pastor Pinto believes that they become involved in the church because they "live better when they attend church, spiritually and because they get the fellowship" (March 2008).

Fellowship at Pastor Pinto's church is similar to *Iglesia Bautista Nueva vida* and *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*. It is a time when the congregation gathers for an informal social event that usually



Front of *Mission Bautista Del Sur*.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

involves music and lots of Latino food. Often times they travel to parks and lakes in the area in order to meet with other Evangelical Christian sister churches from Southwest Kansas.

The congregation also grows in their relationship during the different services the church provides. Aside from the Sunday service, the church offers Sunday School, youth services, assistance to needy families, English classes, and most holiday celebrations at the church. Although these events are not as well attended as the Sunday mass, English classes and assistance for needy families are unique because the wider Spanish community of Syracuse has utilized these services. Pastor Pinto's wife teaches the English classes and she uses the time after class to evangelize to the 10 consistent learners who do not attend the Sunday service.

The *Mission Bautista Del Sur* prides itself in the Bible centric services it provides for its members; however, the congregation's biggest concern is the large group of Latino youth in the community. Pastor Pinto explains, "A lot of churches are



Front sign & side view of *Mission Bautista Del Sur*
Photograph by Katherine Acosta

losing their youth, I think it's due to the focus traditionalism of the church" (March 2008). Pastor Pinto believes that church leaders need to learn to identify with the youth and provide them spirituality in a

modern way or they will be lost to gangs and worldly activities such as drugs and alcohol.

At the height of attendance, the congregation would draw in about 40-50 community members for the Sunday service. However, the congregation is currently experiencing several modifications due to break down of two other Spanish Evangelical congregations in the community. As a result the congregants of the other churches were encouraged to attend *Mission Bautista Del Sur*. The loss of the two congregations and the blending of all members caused much confusion between the church attendees in the community. Pastor Pinto believes this is the key factor in the recent loss of members and the low attendance of about 15-20 people on Sunday mornings. Additionally, a dilemma the congregation suffers from is the transitory nature of the community. Pastor Pinto explains that many of the newcomers are not concerned with settling roots in the community, they are attracted to the job opportunities and as soon as they make enough money they will move on to another city or return to their homeland. However, Pastor Pinto is hopeful and intends on making an impact on the lives of the Latinos in Syracuse.

Chapter Five

Recurring Themes in the Interview Data

Interviews were standardized utilizing the predetermined interview guide (see Appendix A); however questions were adjusted according to each participant's candor and comfort level. Accordingly, participants offered somewhat different reactions when asked to speak about their religious experience and church congregation. For the most part, however, interviews with participants across all congregations in Garden City and Syracuse focused on four main themes:

- motivation for religious participation,
- the role of religion in congregants' lives,
- concerns of the congregants, and
- congregants' perceptions of anti-immigrant sentiment.

This chapter focuses on recurring responses of the interviewees on each of the selected themes.

Motivations for Joining the Church

When analyzing interview responses of congregants regarding the motivators for religious participation as a whole, participants claimed that motivation for religious participation was a result of the closer relationship with God the church provided. However, the specifics of motivations varied and were multilayered. Participants from all Evangelical Christian congregations reported that the utilization of the Bible was also a prime motivator for their participation. One congregant in particular explained this

enthusiasm for church participation by sharing, “It’s not just the pastor telling me what he thinks, it’s the Bible” (March 2008).

In addition, many spoke of *el cambio* or *the change* that people saw in your life as a motivator for others to join:

Well if you are like me then they start off by liking the way they treat you and the way that you feel at home here, but then you start coming because there is a change in your life, and I have learned this change. None of my friends in Mexico would recognize me now, if they saw me they would want to change too (Congregant, March 2008).

The change was explicated by a congregant as the lifestyle one chooses to practices after deciding to give his or her life to God. This, a congregant claimed, is a lifestyle that is focused on “Thankfulness that Christ died for us on the cross and we should serve him and try to create a community to serve him” (March 2008). After *the change* interviewees described an improved spiritual lifestyle and a complete trust that the Lord would solve their issues and concerns. An interviewee stated, “The love of Christ will lead us to show others the love of him. Our church really tries to show the visitors this change in our lives” (March 2008). It is this feeling of content that many participants claim attracts members to participate in their congregation.

Congregants described how the aid services from the church are a motivator for joining their congregation. Pastor Tuche explained,

“Usually it is clothes or food; we try to not give money since you never know what they are spending it on. Or sometimes its helping them find a house, or a job or to set up cable or translating, you know getting them settled in the town” (March 2008). Similarly, at *Mission Bautista Del Sur* ESL classes are offered for English language learners, this service attracts non-church goers, and a congregant described how the time after the end of the class is utilized for evangelizing purposes. Additionally, congregants of *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* described how the church often collects an impromptu offering for people in need of financial assistance. When asked what services the church provides to newly arrived immigrants one participant stated:

To new ones or to brothers and sisters in Christ that are in need, so if they need help paying their bills we will take an extra offering of love on Sunday and someone will take it to them at their house. It doesn't matter if they are newly arrived from Mexico or if they have spent a lot of time at the church, just that they need help (March 2008).

The social aid services that these congregations provide are an attraction for Latinos in need, and are described as tools utilized by the churches for recruitment. However, as Pastor Tuche describes, often times the tools do not prove to be a success, “They make friends at the church and you see them a lot at the events, but as soon as they get a job and make more friends there, you'll hear of them at *Bailes* or at

Latin bars and then they start liking the worldly things and slowly stop coming to learn about God” (March 2008).

Congregants described how the community of God that surrounds them is a motivator for religious participation. For example, a congregant described his or her decision to join the church, “I would say I joined the church to have an encounter with God, to receive him, to receive the Bible in word, but also to experience the community of God” (Congregant, March 2008). Participants described the need to congregate as serving a dual purpose; not only to help them learn the word of God, but also to provide an opportunity to socialize with the people of God, thus fulfilling one of their mandates as Evangelical Christians. Similarly, another participant stated, “The people live better when they attend the church, spiritually and because they get fellowship. People just feel good when they have fellowship with others” (Congregant, March 2008). Therefore, it was described that an additional motivator for religious participation is the desire to assemble with people who share the same beliefs and lifestyle.

Although some participants associated with Christianity prior to their first visit to the current congregation, other participants claimed to have been initially attracted only to Evangelical Christianity through the kindness and friendliness the fellowship of people at the church provided them:

They received us well, people were really friendly, and it was a nice atmosphere. People in this small town were not friendly, I mean the Americans, and it was nice to have people treat you like family when they didn't even know you. Then I started liking it because of what they actually preached (Congregant, March 2008).

For this participant and others like him, the motivation for religious participation was a result of the warm welcome of the members of the congregation. They described that it was not until after being surrounded by the people of the church, and the fellowship they provided that the participant began to take on the religious beliefs. Additionally, many congregants claimed that their congregation was open to all people and this—they maintain—is inviting to Latino peoples in Southeast Kansas.

Many congregants interviewed explained that their decision to move to Kansas was associated to a family member or friend in the area. As a result, some interviewees claimed to attend religious services purely to interact with their friends who attend church, “Well I would say that I primarily attend because we have friends that go there and they invite us and then we made more friends there and it's a nice way to hang out with them” (Congregant, March 2008). In addition, the need to socialize with other Latinos was described as a motivator to join the church, “I look for Hispanic people because I am Hispanic, and I would assume that's the case for most people” (Congregant, March

2008). Similarly, the language barrier and the feelings associated with living in a foreign land also attracted interviewees to participate in Latino congregations. For example, a Congregant explained:

It's the pure sense as a human being of having to be relational, or not even that but sometimes you feel the need to be surrounded around people. To converse or even just hear conversations... One of the main reasons why we attend is the simple fact of needing to get together with other people that speak at least the same language even if we don't share the exact same customs with the others (March 2008).

Although this particular participant did not believe in the doctrine of the church, the fellowship of the people and their need to interact with others who speak the same language and share the same culture drew them to the congregation.

Finally, a participant also claimed that Latinos were drawn to participate in Evangelical religious congregations because they were attempting to fill a void in their life. The interviewee stated:

Latinos are looking for something missing in their lives here. Something that is incomplete about them and I think they try to find it in church. I think everyone in church is looking for a group of people to fill the void for something; we go to this church because we have not found a Catholic one we like (March 2008).

The motivation driving this participant is a result of the lack of a Spanish speaking Catholic congregation in the selected sites, therefore, creating an attraction to any Spanish speaking congregation regardless

of the doctrine. Similarly, “They see something missing in their lives and they ask us how we do it and that’s an in to the church, we then talk to them about Christ” (Congregant, March 2008). The congregants are described to utilize the Evangelical congregations in both Syracuse and Garden City in attempts to fill the void they experience in a foreign land.

Role religion plays in the lives of congregants

When discussing the role of religion in the past and present lives of congregants interviewed, 14 out of 20 interviewees claimed that religion did not play an important role in their life prior to immigration. These participants claimed that they rarely attended church services in their homeland. Of these interviewees, 13 were Catholic converts who claimed to have been born into their past religion. They all explained that tradition was the primary reason they associated with Catholicism. Of the remaining interviewed, one did not associate with any religion in the past, four had been Evangelical Christians since birth, and two were Catholics all their lives and still consider themselves Catholic.

When speaking about the congregation they attend now, 18 out of 20 participants described that their church played a very important role in their life. Eighteen of the interviewees claimed to attend church service at least two-three times a week participating in church

functions. Of these numbers, nine participants were from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, four participants were from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*, and five participants were from *Mission Bautista Del Sur*. However, many congregants claimed to spend several hours participating in church functions, for example one congregant stated, “I am in the singing group so we practice a lot, like 5 hours a week, but not counting that I would say [I participate another] 10 hours or 15 hours” (March 2008). The average interviewee across both cities claimed to spend 6-8 hours participating in the church activities inside and outside of the church premises.

In addition to spending a large portion of their free time at church activities, most interviewees described the aid they received from other members of the church. They claimed to trust fellow members, something that was instantly created upon joining the congregation, for example:

When you come here and know no one, it's good to have a fraternity of people that you can rely on. For example, once I needed a babysitter because I had to work last minute, my close friends were out of town and so I called one of the ladies from the church that doesn't work and she was able to help me out. I don't really know her, but it was nice because since she was from the church I knew that I didn't have to worry about whether she was going to be bad to them! (Congregant, March 2008).

Therefore, the people in the congregation were able to trust each other in time of need based solely on the fact that they were both members of the same church. Similarly, a participant stated about the members of the church, “They are a hand when we are in need. We take care of each other and make sure we all checking up on each other” (March 2008). Additionally, another participant described how important the members of the congregation were:

I love my church and my brothers and sisters of the church they are like my family here and I trust them and would help them with anything they needed. Syracuse is a small town and we have a group of friends that we know are good people here in the church (March 2008).

The congregants also described the guidance they received from their pastors and church leaders. One congregant explained:

Just like when you are a little kid, you need your parents we need the church. For guidance and for help in time of need, so the church is like our family here. Like when I am in Mexico I have my parents and my actual family. That’s what the church is for us now. (March 2008).

The members of the church utilize each other to make sure everyone is living according to the church values. Often times this was accomplished by making phone calls when a fellow congregant missed the Sunday service or by voicing their concerns when concerns arose. For example, congregants in leadership positions often visited the

homes of congregants who were believed to be participating in ‘worldly’ activities.

Finally, most of the participants described that their social life revolved around the church and the social services the church provided. Many participants stated that all of their friends were members of the church. “The church plays a big role in my life, I only hang out here. Since my husband was from here and his friends were from the church, then they just became my friends. Our times here are spent in church, at home, and work” (March 2008). Therefore, spare time in the lives of the participants interviewed was spent at church functions or in fellowship with church members outside of the church.

Concerns of the Congregants

Ten of the participants interviewed expressed that the key concern of the congregations is centered on the youth of the church. The congregants particularly expressed worries regarding the education and gang issues of Garden City and Syracuse. A congregant described:

When someone meets you they ask you, ‘who are you with’ if you are in the other gang then without even knowing you they have become your enemy, or if you are with their friend gangs they have your back, but worse if you don’t claim anyone they recruit you try to scare you until you have no option, but to join (March 2008).

As a result of these gang dangers, many of the programs available at the congregations are geared towards educating the youth and creating activities

they can partake in during the weekend nights. Furthermore, many participants expressed concerns for the boisterous activities that some misguided youth and adult members of the congregation participate in. “A lot of people here lately have decided to have a worldly community, they only have the nights off and so they participate in activities of the night, drinking, dancing, and drugs” (March 2008).

Additionally, people of the churches were distressed about evangelizing people outside of the church. Eleven of the participants interviewed expressed evangelizing as the foremost concern for their congregation. Many interviewees expressed desire to perform a better job spreading the message of the congregation to the rest of the community. For instance, a participant stated “A lot of people don’t know that they need to be saved to go to heaven” (Congregant, March 2008). Several interviewees also expressed concerns about how the congregation is portrayed to the public during evangelizing, “Well we worry about what message our church sends, that we follow the principal [doctrine]” (March 2008). Similarly, several congregants were concerned about the organization and harmony of their congregations. When asked to speak on the central concern of the congregation, a respondent replied, “The Unity of the church, Satan often times invades the church you know, other than unity I would say evangelism outside of the walls of the church is something not done often, but is a big concern” (Congregant, March 2008).

The congregants interviewed were also concerned with the issues that kept their fellow churchgoers from attending at least every Sunday service. In discussing this issue, many congregants claimed that the irregularity of attendance at church was due to the long work days associated with many of the farming and meatpacking jobs that Latinos in the community commonly hold. A congregant said:

People here, me included, work really hard. Sometimes I get up so tired on Sunday and I don't have the energy to go to church, Sunday is my only day of rest. But I know that the Lord gives me the strength and I get up, but I think a lot of people that have not been coming are not coming because of all the work (March 2008).

Three participants out of the five who stated they did not attend at least two - three church activities a week claimed that demanding work schedules kept them from attending church functions more often. Similarly, Pastor Tuche described that this was the chief reason for missing members at Sunday morning services, "Our people here work hard jobs, you know feedlots or the plant and they have to work long hours and they don't get too many days to rest so as a church we worry about the people that can't come to church because they have to work so much" (March 2008). Additionally, particularly members from *Mission Bautista Del Sur*, claimed the transitory nature of the people in Syracuse kept attendance at the congregation to a minimum:

Well what concerns me the most is not so much the people within the church, but it's such a small town that people are just not stable here. They stay here a little time, they gather money and then they go back

to Mexico or they move to another town. You have to have a good job or something to keep you here, roots, to stick it out, there's nothing for people to do. I would say that of 100, only 2% or even 1% stay in Syracuse. They just live here a little bit and leave, that's why the membership is up and down, and that's frustrated other churches and why we are the only ones here now. It's like a rollercoaster, and that is what worries me the most (Congregant, March 2008).

For the most part, congregants were more than ever concerned about these populations because their lifestyle does not allow them to practice religion in one location for an extensive amount of time. Additionally, the congregants worry about the transient immigrants as it further jeopardizes the stability of the only Spanish speaking congregation in Syracuse.

Eight participants interviewed articulated United States immigration status as their and other congregant's foremost distress. Most congregants communicated a fear of deportation. A number of congregants claimed that the support of church lent a hand in settling some of their fears:

I feel that one of the necessities is the legalization and it's one of the motivations for why people go to church here. It's another way to socialize with together people, some of them seek a refuge in the church, a security and to have to share or co-exist in a city, with Latinos where we live in hiding. We know that the people at this church don't look at us like we are odd because we are illegal" (Congregant, March 2008).

On the other hand, a few participants interviewed from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* were apprehensive in being honest about their immigration

status with the Anglos congregants from Fellowship Baptist Church. For instance, Pastor Perez said:

I would say, since we are part of an English mother church they might feel concerned about racism by some of the English speaking people, not that there is, but they might sense that anyway. The Hispanic immigrant that comes to this country especially not knowing that language might feel that they are unable to communicate, and which they really can't and that makes them feel really intimidated is the word I am looking for, so they especially feel intimidated sharing a church with Anglos, that's inside and outside I would say a lot or a good percentage of the people I pastor are not of legal status and that really is a pressure for them living here, so one of the biggest concerns is trusting that the Anglos won't call immigration (Pastor Perez, March 2008).

Many members of *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* expressed the racism they sensed within their congregation as a big concern, and claimed it was this prejudice that bolstered their fears of deportation.

Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

When respondents were asked if anti-immigrant sentiment exists in each community respectively, a total of 20 interviewees affirmed that they believed this was an issue. Of this total, 10 interviewees were from *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida*, five interviewees were from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* and five interviewees were from *Mission Bautista Del Sur*. Many of the participants spoke of the difficulties of living in a foreign land, for instance, "It's hard here; it's not like our home. I will always feel like a stranger here, always" (March 2008). Several congregants claimed that

stereotypes were at the root of the anti-immigrant sentiments, “It’s their country and we are invaders. They think that we are all illegal and that we have tons of kids and that all we do is live off the government, but that’s not true” (March 2008). Similarly, an interviewee said, “The natives feel the Latinos are only concerned with making money to send home and that we are not invested in making the U.S. a better place” (March 2008).

Many respondents described instances of racism occurring in their community. For instance, a congregant said that often times racism is subtle, “It’s bad service or at a restaurant they don’t care to fill your water, it’s the little things” (March 2008). However, most instances of racism described in the interviews were overtly inappropriate. A congregant from Syracuse depicted the series of graffiti incidents that occurred recently, the interviewee explained:

It’s the lack of respect for the people that live in the parking lot and it makes me feel bad and I’m sure it made the people that live there feel bad too... you only have 48 hours to take off a vandalism, like gang signs, but in Syracuse I guess “Go back to Mexico you *beaners*” is not a derogatory enough term to them because its still there (March 2008).

The interviewees from Syracuse expressed frustration for the slow manner in which the vandalism was removed. One of the congregants explained that it was not until she took a trip to the office of the City of Syracuse that some of the signs were removed. However, she explained, one remains because it is on

someone's private property, and they claimed nothing could be done to mandate removal.

Similarly, another congregant described the explicit racist language he encountered in his line of work; "I'm a trucker, so when I drive I listen and I hear the other truckers or the police say racist things, calling us '*beaners*' or calling our homes 'taco houses' it's bad" (March 2008). Many of the respondents claimed that feelings of anti-immigrant sentiment and racism are most observable in work environments. A participant argued this was a result of the superior employment positions Anglos customarily hold, "In the jobs the Americans are the supervisors, in the stores they are the managers, and they are always in positions to abuse their power" (March 2008).

Additionally, problems exist within the high schools of both communities. Congregants claim that dilemmas at these locations arise due to language differences. A congregant from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* described how many of the Latino and Anglo students who attend Garden City High School physically fight due to misinterpretations when Latino students speak Spanish: "They always think we are saying bad things about them when we are not!" (Congregant, March 2008). Similarly, an interviewee from *Mission Bautista Del Sur* described that Latino students are angered about the English only policy at Syracuse High School. The respondent explained that this is a major issue because, "It's one of the liberties of the United States, [freedom of speech] but that doesn't matter here in Syracuse, they just say it

for their own advantage, and no one can get them to see the other side. They say it's not racism, they won't change it" (March 2008).

Some of the anti-immigrant sentiment described by the interviewees occurred within the congregations. For instance, a congregant from *Mission Bautista Del Sur* claimed that racism is a problem between the members of the Anglo and the Spanish congregations. The congregant explained that once during the cleanup time after a Latino fellowship event, her husband experienced a tense moment with the Anglo pastor. She described that in a discussion regarding their upcoming annual trip to Mexico, the Anglo pastor asked if the trip was expensive, "So jokingly my husband said, 'why you want to give us money?' and the pastor said, 'I would, but only if you promised not to come back!'" (March 2008). Similarly, the Garden City congregants from *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* and *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* described how they perceived that the Anglo members of their mother churches looked down upon them or were not content with their presence within the church and the community. For instance, when asked about racism a member of *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* said, "People [Anglos] always tend to look down to you, you know, it makes me feel uncomfortable and it's a barrier that will always be there, and no one can get rid of it" (March 2008).

A few of the congregants claimed that the anti-immigrant sentiment that occurred in the communities was a result of the customs of the Latino culture, the respondent said:

It has to do with the way the Latinos act, if they are going to be drinking outside a lot that's what bothers them [the Anglos]. They see people's junk outside and they think we are all dirty and they don't like it... When I moved here my neighbors asked me if we were going to have parties or loud music (March 2008).

The congregant claimed that her neighbors feared the chaos that Anglos often associate with Latino immigrants. However, she claims that their reservations were alleviated when they learned that her family was Christian. Likewise, Pastor Pinto claimed that issues of racism occur most often with non- church members of the community, "It's the people that don't attend church that have a lot of problems with Americans" (Pastor Pinto, March 2008).

Most congregants claimed that they had minimal to no social interaction with the Anglos. One congregant gave details on this issue, "I think that there is a duality, mostly occurring because of the different language and culture, but mostly because of the different lifestyles, we don't live the same and that creates confusion and separation" (March 2008). While some respondents asserted that this occurred because the Anglo community was not accepting of the Latino immigrants, other congregants argued that this occurs, "Not necessarily because the Americans put up a barrier... I think we all choose to separate... the [Latino] adult people that come here conserve their own customs and they separate themselves" (March 2008). However, this separation did not exclusively occur between the Anglo and Latinos of the

communities, several congregants also described the racism and separation that occurs within Latinos:

Within those groups there is a rivalry, I have seen accusations of not being a pure Mexican... Mexican-Americans think that recently arrived immigrants are less worthy because they have not adapted or that they are not financially where they [Mexican-Americans] are right now, or because they feel they are in a weird way superior because they have been here longer (Pastor Perez, March 2008).

These issues within the established and recently arrived Latinos were described occurring within and outside of the congregations.

Many of the congregants articulated extreme frustration about the anti-immigrant sentiment they felt occurred in their communities. A congregant described, "There are a lot of people that don't want us here. Look I'll tell you that I wanted to go back to California because at least there is more of us there and they don't mess with us, but my husband said no" (March 2008). Others expressed dissatisfaction regarding what seemed to be designated Latino communities within Garden City, "We are half the town and we all live in a little area" (March 2008). Although almost all congregants interviewed described that they felt racism and anti-immigrant sentiment was a problem in the small communities, Pastor Pinto was hopeful for the future, "It has to change because more and more people keep coming and eventually we will have to learn to coexist" (Pastor Pinto, March 2008).

Chapter Six

Findings in the Data: Interviews and Surveys

It was hypothesized that Latino immigrants in both Syracuse and Garden City would claim that feelings of isolation were a motivator for joining the Evangelical church (H1). My analysis supports the hypothesis given that 35.2% of the surveyed participants of both Syracuse and Garden City combined claimed that feelings of loneliness was a motivator for joining the Evangelical church (See question 19-G in Appendix A).

A third hypothesis claimed was that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse and Garden City that claimed a strong affiliation with a religion prior to immigration would continue to affiliate strongly with that religion post immigration (H2). Twenty-five surveyed participants (or 46.3% of the entire sample) claimed a strong affiliation to a religion prior to immigration and of this percentage, 100% of these congregants claimed a strong affiliation post-immigration, therefore, the data is in line with the prediction.

I hypothesized that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse would attend church more often and regularly than Latino Evangelical Christians in Garden City, Kansas (H3). Upon evaluation of the data, outside of weddings and funerals, Garden City ($\bar{M} = 5.89$, see Table 7) congregants did not significantly attend more services than Syracuse ($\bar{M} = 6.20$, see Table 7) congregants, ($t(54) = -1.03$, $p = .31$). Although the study finds that Syracuse congregants did in fact on average attend more often on average when

compared to Garden City congregants, the .31 difference is far too small for these numbers to be statistically significant, therefore, there is not enough evidence to support this hypothesis.

Table 7 Group Statistics for Attendance of Both Cities

City		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attendance	Garden City	46	5.89	.875	.129
	Syracuse	10	6.20	.789	.249

Finally, it was hypothesized that Latino Evangelical Christians in Syracuse and Garden City, Kansas who did not affiliate with a religion in past, would do so post-immigration (H4). The data is in line with the prediction, 100% of the sample who did not affiliate with a religion prior to immigration claim affiliation with a religion post-immigration. It is important to note that only 3.8% of the sample (2 surveyed congregants) were considered for this hypothesis, however, due to the percentages these findings are in fact statistically significant.

In the following sections the survey data and interview data were compiled and analyzed as a whole to develop five central findings for the comparison of Syracuse and Garden City congregations.

Alienation of Latinos

Latino congregants in Garden City and in Syracuse alike were linked to an English speaking mother church; however, all congregations hold separate Sunday and weekly services. All congregations of Garden City and Syracuse

had at least a couple of congregants who were fluent English speakers; however, they regularly attended the Spanish speaking services because they preferred the environment. For the remainder of the congregation, language appears to be the primary reason for the separation of services; participants also claimed that differences in culture played a role in the separation. Nevertheless, the division resulted in the alienation of Latinos within the congregations of Garden City and Syracuse. This was evident within *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* of Garden City which had yet to raise enough funds for their own building and meets in the basement of Fellowship Baptist Church. A congregant of Garden City elaborated on the division seen within the congregations:

Well it's a little odd, we are in the same building, but I don't really see them much. We don't speak the same language and don't share the same tradition so even if we are in the same church we are still like two different congregations, we have different needs (March 2008).

Although the pastors of both *Iglesia Nueva Vida* and Fellowship Baptist Church have tried to ameliorate relationships between Anglos and Latinos by holding a joint service a congregant explains that it has not worked. "When we have joined sermons they physically sit in two sides, the Americans go on one side and we go to the other, so they don't mingle, and well there are cordial feelings, but there are not interactions..." (March 2009). *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* of Garden City is also linked to an Anglo Nazarene Church, however, they were recently granted a building. As a result, little to no

interaction occurred between the Anglos and Latinos of the congregations. Similarly, although the congregation of Syracuse is part of the Syracuse Anglo Baptist Church, they now have a separate building near by, however; they do not hold any events together. It is this division that can be seen in the studied congregations of Garden City and Syracuse that adds to the alienation that Latinos experience within the congregations.

In addition, congregants of Garden City and Syracuse alike inherently felt alienated as a result of living in a new land, new culture, and new community. Many congregants of Garden City spoke of feeling estrangement in their community, for instance, “There are the Hispanics on one side and the Americans on the other, for example, when you see a party or activity it’s not a mixture of people, it’s just Latinos or just Americans” (March 2008). Similarly, another Garden City congregant spoke of the geographic separation that could be seen within the community:

It’s two different worlds, you go to one part of town and for blocks it’s only Mexicans and you can do the same for the Americans, the only difference is that we are half the town and we all live in a little area. They get the whole town... (March 2008).

Spatially, the community of Syracuse is furthermore segregated with the majority of Latinos inhabiting in two predominant areas of the city. This spatial segregation impedes interaction between the communities, adding to the visible isolation of Latinos in these areas. A Syracuse congregant who lives outside of the predominant Latino residential



A home in one of the two predominantly Latino residential areas of Syracuse.
Photograph by Katherine Acosta.

areas spoke of the cultural differences that were apparent and separated them from the Anglos. The

Syracuse congregant stated:

When I moved here my neighbors asked me if we were going to have parties or loud music, and they kept asking me many questions that concerned them, now would they have done this to an American? No way, it's because I am Mexican... But I don't ever see them or speak to them we are strangers on the same block, but I see them with other neighbors who are white, so you see (March 2008).

This Syracuse congregant felt unwanted and alienated from the other families on her block. Therefore, the findings show that congregants of this study in Garden City and Syracuse alike, experienced a sense of alienation within their community and within their congregation.

Furthermore, survey data revealed that 60% of Syracuse congregants had no knowledge or only a little knowledge of the English language. Contrastingly, congregants of Garden City had higher number of English speakers and only 26.7% of the surveyed congregants reported none or little

English language skills. Therefore, Latino congregants of Syracuse are more separated from the English only speaking community than the Garden City congregants, adding to the alienation within Latino Syracusans. However, congregants from both cities expressed how language barriers caused separation within their congregations. For instance, a Garden City congregant stated:

I feel that conflicts here between Americans and Latinos is because they don't know each other very well, mostly because of the language so people are not greeting each other with open arms, now if were a bilingual community it would be a different story (March 2008).

In addition, immigrants are alienated within their communities as well as within their congregations by their United States undocumented status. Twenty percent of Garden City congregants surveyed and 40% of Syracuse congregants surveyed reported an undocumented status in the United States. However, the numbers may have been higher in both cities as some congregants may have felt threaten and not comfortable reporting their undocumented status. All the same, this issue caused much tension and concern in the lives of both Garden City and Syracuse congregants. Congregants of both cities expressed a sense of distrust of their fellow Anglo congregants by and large because many feared deportation.

Table 8 Perception of How Welcomed Latinos are in the U.S. by City

		City		Total
		Garden City	Syracuse	
Not welcome at all	Count	7	4	11
	% within City	15.2%	40.0%	19.6%
Only a little welcome	Count	25	6	31
	% within City	54.3%	60.0%	55.4%
Very welcome	Count	14	0	14
	% within City	30.4%	.0%	25.0%
Total	Count	46	10	56
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Finally, immigrants were alienated in their congregation and community due to their perceptions of how they felt they were welcomed in the United States. One hundred percent of Syracuse surveyed congregants felt that they were not welcomed or only welcomed a little in the United States (refer to Table 8). In the same way, 80% of Syracuse surveyed congregants felt that they were not welcomed at all or only a little welcomed in their community. Similarly, 69.5% of Garden City surveyed congregants felt that they were not welcome or only a little welcomed in the United States (refer to Table 8). When asked about the city they reside in, 60.8% of Garden City congregants claimed they were not welcomed or only welcomed a little. As a result of these high feelings of not being welcomed in the country and city in which they live, congregants of Garden City and Syracuse felt estranged from the community as a whole.

All issues discussed in this section played a role in the alienation of Latinos in the communities of Garden City and Syracuse. Syracuse participants reported feeling less welcomed in their city when compared to

their Garden City counterparts being reported to the authorities and as a result and results in a primary motivation for religious participation in the small community. Fifty percent of Syracuse congregants reported that feelings of loneliness within their community encouraged their participation in the church (Refer to Table 9). In contrast, only 31.8% of Garden City congregants reported that feelings of loneliness were a contributing factor in their decision to join the church. This may be due to the larger population of Latinos and Latino 'hangouts' (clubs, restaurants, stores etc.) available in Garden City. Additionally, 27.3% of congregants from Garden City reported to have joined their church because it reminded them of their homeland, compared to 40% or congregants from Syracuse who reported the same.

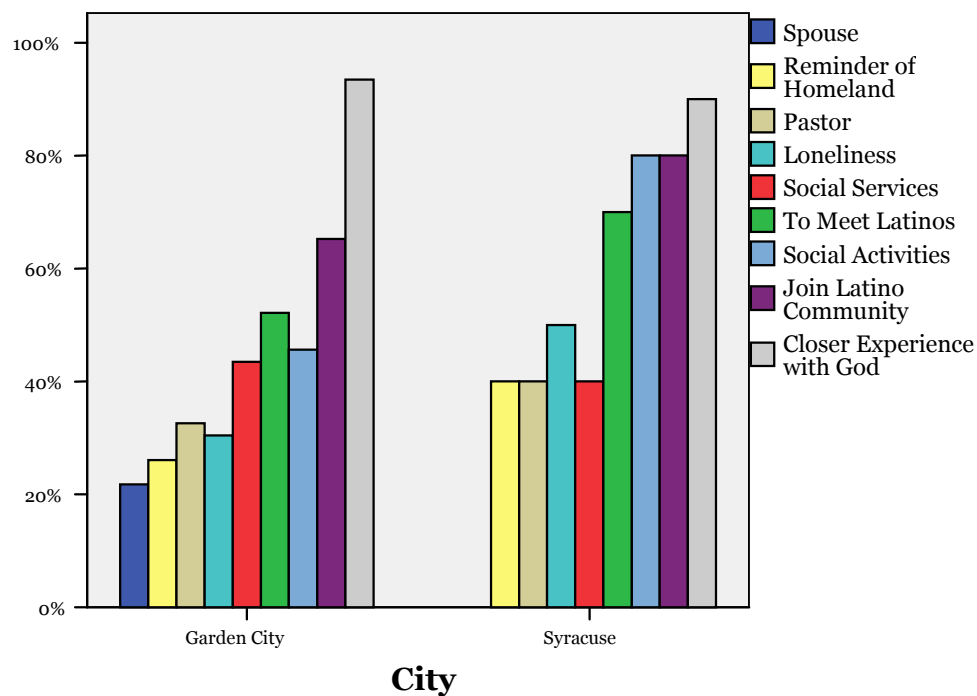
The congregation as an Immigrant Support Center

One of the ways that Latinos utilized the church across congregations in Garden City and Syracuse was as a support center. Members appeared to draw on church resources in order to meet basic needs in their life as immigrants in the United States. For example, in view of the data gathered some visiting and temporary members appear to be purely drawing on the church services in order to get settled in a foreign land. Congregations in both cities provide food and monetary assistance to members and non-members in need by asking members for an impromptu offering. These social services played a role in attracting members to join the church. In Garden City 45.5%

reported that these services were a primary reason that attracted them to their congregation and in Syracuse 40% reported the same.

In addition, the congregations in both cities served its congregants as a support center in order to alleviate feelings of not being welcomed in their

Table 9 Motivations for Religious Participation by City



respective communities. This occurred by creating a space where they could meet similar people in a foreign land. Members across all congregations overwhelmingly reported joining the church to meet more Latinos (54.5% Garden City, 70% Syracuse) and join a community of Latinos (68.2% Garden City, 80% Syracuse) in their cities (refer to Table 9). The social activities that the congregations provided were very attractive to immigrants who felt the

need for social interaction in a community in which they felt alienated by several factors. For instance, a Garden City congregant stated, “We work a lot and both work in places where we don’t talk much because we don’t speak English so by the time Sunday comes we are ready to do something with people who speak Spanish” (March 2008). The congregations of Garden City and Syracuse make Latino gatherings available to its member and this is a primary motivation for church participation (47.7% Garden City and 80% Syracuse; refer to Table 9).

Finally, the sense of community in Christ that is created within the congregations of Garden City and Syracuse has lent a hand to members and accommodated them in a foreign land where many described racism and feelings of not being welcomed as a problem (See Table 10). This sense of community or support center eases congregants’ tensions associated with undocumented status and discrimination in the communities. Therefore, congregants, particularly those from Syracuse as they reported feeling more alienated than their Garden City counterparts, utilized the church as a support group in a foreign land.

Table 10 Discrimination by City

		City		Total
		Garden City	Syracuse	
Yes	Count	3	7	3
	within City	69.6	70.0	69.6
No	Count	1	3	1
	% within City	30.4	30.0%	30.4
Total	Count	4	1	56
	% within City	100.0%	100.0%	100.0

The Congregation as a Surrogate Family

Congregants interviewed in both Garden City and Syracuse utilized the church as a surrogate family. In the absence of relatives, the church stepped in to celebrate holidays, and special occasions with the congregants. In addition, the church also provided aid to its members during times of need and despair and as discussed in the previous section, the congregation served as a support group for the congregants. For example, a Syracuse congregant described:

It is more important now, I go more often and I want my daughter to follow the word of God. I mean I have always gone to church and it's always been important, but now that we live in Syracuse it's even more important because I am growing everyday in my faith and the people of the church are now my family. We pray together, we eat together, we even cry together; they are all we have here (March 2008).

The role of the congregation was furthered familiarized because members of Garden City and Syracuse referred to each other as *Hermano* and *Hermana en Cristo* (brother and sister in Christ).

In addition to the familial role, the church and its congregants were described to fulfill a parental role in the lives of the congregants. Congregants described the guidance that they received from the pastor and from the leaders from the church. For instance, "They are a hand when we are in need. We take care of each other and make sure we are all checking up on each other" (March 2008). Therefore, congregants of both congregations depended on each other for strengthening their surrogate familial bond.

The Pivotal Role of Religion

Religion and the church played a fundamental role in the lives of congregants in Garden City and Syracuse. When asked what congregants identified with first, their nationality, their religion, their culture, or as Americans; 60% of surveyed congregants from Syracuse reported to identify first with their religion and 45.5% of Garden City congregants reported the same. The church was reported to play a very important role in the lives of Garden City surveyed congregants (95.7%) and in the life of Syracuse congregants (100%).

Table 11 Religious Activity Attendance by City

		City		Total
		Garden City	Syracuse	
One to two times a month	Count	2	0	2
	% within City	4.3%	.0%	3.6%
One time a week	Count	14	2	16
	% within City	30.4%	20.0%	28.6%
More than once a week	Count	17	4	21
	% within City	37.0%	40.0%	37.5%
More than 3 times a week	Count	13	4	17
	% within City	28.3%	40.0%	30.4%
Total		46	10	56
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Most of the congregants' spare time was described as being spent participating in church activities across both Garden City and Syracuse. For example, a congregant from Syracuse stated, "My life completely revolves around the church, completely 100%" (March 2008). Congregants from Garden City were very active in their church, 65.3% of the congregants surveyed reported attending church services multiple times a week, and 80%

of Syracuse congregants also reported attending church activities multiple times a week (refer to Table 11).

Congregants not only overwhelmingly attended church services several times a week; they were also very involved within the leadership and within the singing group, Sunday School, religious counseling, Bible study and volunteering. Overall, surveyed congregants of Syracuse, by percentage of congregants surveyed, participated in church activities more than the Garden City congregants (refer to Table 12). Again, Syracuse congregants' superior participation may have been associated with their elevated sense of alienation.

Table 12 Contingency Table of Church Participation by City

		City		Total
		Garden City	Syracuse	
Choir	Count	16	3	19
	% within City	35.6%	30.0%	
Small Group	Count	18	4	22
	% within City	40.0%	40.0%	
Counseling	Count	7	3	10
	% within City	15.6%	30.0%	
Bible Study	Count	30	10	40
	% within City	66.7%	100.0%	
Sunday School	Count	27	8	35
	% within City	60.0%	80.0%	
Volunteering	Count	26	6	32
	% within City	57.8%	60.0%	
Total	Count	45	10	55

Congregants spend several hours a week participating in the activities that the congregations have to offer, therefore in both Garden City and Syracuse the church and religion play a pivotal role in the lives of the congregants.

Meals as a Venue for Social Interaction

Fellowship across congregations in both Garden City and Syracuse was utilized to promote church as a community. Fellowship is described by a Garden City congregant, “Well I would say that the activities they provide for the family, it’s a nice time off when we can come to the church, learn about God, hang out with good people that understand us and eat good food” (March 2008). Most of the services for congregants in all congregations include music and particularly food. Meals were the center of gatherings for church events. Pastor Perez of Garden City explained, “We try to get together every two to three months to have a dinner after the service, we have those dinners so that it’s time to just get together to talk in a very informal level... we go to the park or bowling” (March 2008).

These events with meals were also a great recruitment strategy for the congregations; Pastor Tuche of Garden City described how events with meals generally drew in more newcomers. Another Garden City congregant also expanded, “Oh yeah, that’s how we get them to come! We have snacks for the kids, cookies, and then in *compañerismo* we will bring dishes to a person’s house to share” (March 2008).

Additionally, meals were a way for the Latino congregants to share with each other about their cultures, “Mexican food, Peruvian food, from a lot of different places, but all Latin you know rice, meats, a variety of food” (March 2008). Therefore, congregants were also utilizing these fellowship gatherings

as a form of cultural retention. These events were described by most congregants in both Garden City and Syracuse as the highlight of their church activities, “You are surrounded by people who believe the same, it’s a nice atmosphere” stated a Garden City congregant (March 2008).

Conclusion

The findings of this research lead to the conclusion that religion plays a fundamental role in the lives of interviewed and surveyed Latino Evangelical Christians in both Garden City and Syracuse. Congregants in both cities alike predominately participate in church activities in their every day life and primarily socialize exclusively with other congregants. Most participants interviewed and surveyed attended church services several times a week and celebrated most holidays and special events with their congregation. Therefore, the congregation and its activities were crucial in the quotidian lives of its members.

In this section, I have discussed how Latino Evangelical Christians are motivated to participate in their religious congregation by the alienation they felt while living in a foreign land and existing within a different culture. They automatically felt welcomed by the friendly people they encountered at the congregations and this ameliorated their condition and facilitated their transition into their new community. As previously discussed, it is due to this alienation that many of the services and resources that the church provided became very attractive to Latino immigrants.

Some of these attractive church services and resources I argued in this section included how congregants were drawn in to their congregation by the social services the church provided. The monetary and food assistance congregations had available for people in need were a key factor that initially drew in newcomers to seek the church. An additional motivation described in this section was the utilization of the congregation as a support group. Congregants relied and were content in their congregation as they were able to provide the support group the parishioners require in a foreign land. Similarly, the congregation as a surrogate family was discussed in this section, and it was argued that the congregation steps in to fill the absent role of the extended family in the new home land. Finally, the social activities the church provided as a motivation was discussed in this chapter. The social outlet that the congregation provided for the alienated immigrants was essential in attracting members as well as keeping them.

The cities of Garden City and Syracuse share an abundance of commonalities as discussed in organization of congregations, atmosphere during services, motivation for participation, and friction between Anglo and Latino congregations. However, contrastingly Syracuse reported more incidences of racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and hostility. It may have been for this heightened sense of alienation that Syracuse congregants reported being more active in activities and services than their Garden City counterparts.

All of the resources the church provided for these immigrants lent a hand in making the transition of these immigrants into their new communities easier. It is not to say that these congregants were solely attracted to their congregation due to these services and resources, however, taking into consideration the heightened sense of alienation that congregants encountered on a daily basis, it is evident that the church was partly appealing because it provided its members a space where they could practice their own customs, speak their native tongue, and socialize with friendly people in a positive atmosphere and environment that reminded them of home and allows them to feel welcomed in a foreign land.

Chapter Seven

Limitations and Closing Remarks

This study suffered from several limitations. The first of these limitations was due to the day selected for survey distribution. All surveys were dispensed on Sunday, March 9th; this date was selected because of the Human Subjects approval from the University of Kansas earlier that week. Unfortunately, March 9th is when Daylight Savings time began. Due to this, many congregants may have faced confusion regarding the time the service started or may have not wanted to attend church due to the hour later start. It was indicated in a conversation with Pastor Perez that attendance was particularly low on this Sunday and he concurred that the time change may have influenced this.

The subsequent limitation doubled as one of the strengths of this study. My familiarity with the small communities, congregations, and some of the participants allowed me to have immediate access and trust within the congregations, however, it also may have created a pressure or discomfort with some participants. Due to my family's involvement in one of the selected sites and due to the fact that I was a past resident of Syracuse, many participants may have felt reluctant to be honest or might have felt pressured to answer interview questions in a certain way.

Additionally, another factor that may have influenced participants' responses may have been the location of the interviews.

Some of the participants requested to be interviewed in their church building and this may have produced pressure to reply a certain way. Although interviews were conducted in private area, the fact that we were discussing religious participation in a church may have persuaded participants to appear more religious.

The use of tape recording is another limitation of this research study. Many participants showed a discomfort regarding the taping of the interview and this may have influenced their responses. However, it was made very clear that recordings were only utilized due to the loss of details when only note taking is employed.

The fifth limitation for this study was Syracuse's loss of congregations. Two congregations were intended to be compared in each location and the recent dismantling of two of the three congregations that existed in Syracuse posed a setback. In addition, due to these changes Pastor Pinto expressed a lack of attendance, which he claimed was due to upset members who did not like the mixture of the congregations.

Finally, there was an overall lack of participant interest in the study. Few members volunteered to be interviewed for the study. As a result, only *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* had ten willing members, with *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* and *Mission Bautista Del Sur* each having five. Nevertheless, the number of interviews remains

proportional to the congregations since *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* has double the members of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno* and *Mission Bautista Del Sur*.

Although there were several limitations to the study, the data gathered through this research was significant for several reasons. The study fills the gap in the literature about post-1965 immigrant congregations in new immigrant gateways, particularly rural areas. It also collected demographics such as United States documented status; a variable researchers do not often collect. This study is additionally valuable as it utilizes the same measures to compare two similar research sites which is an area that requires scholarly growth. Finally, my immigrant status adds to the literature, for Cadge and Ecklund (2007) assert, very few works in the post-1965 immigrant congregation literature is completed by an insider.

Although this research provides an insight to the role of religion and a comparison by city of immigrant congregations in new gateways, the sample was much too small in one research site (Syracuse N=10), additional research on post-1965 immigrant congregations is essential to further understand the role of religion in rural immigrant's life. As this study has shown, the congregation and religion played a fundamental role in the lives of rural Latino Evangelical Christians. As this study demonstrates in Syracuse, much instability occurred amongst grassroots congregations, it would be valuable to research the organizational structures of these congregations in order to

secure their survival. In addition, this study has brought to light the friction and distrust that occurred within Latino congregations and their Anglo counterparts. Therefore, it is suggested to seek more insight and data on the interactions and relationships within dual congregations under the same building. Finally, a look at multicultural services, mostly found among youth within dual congregations would be an excellent area for future research.

Apendix A

1.Participant Survey

Information Statement:

The Department of International Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand the role of religion in the lives of Latino immigrants in Kansas. This will entail your completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire packet is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaires should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of the role of religion in the lives of Latinos in Kansas. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are over the age of eighteen. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email dhann@ku.edu or mdenning@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

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1. What is your gender (circle one)
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

2. What is your age? (circle one)
 - a. 18-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-54
 - d. 55-64
 - e. 65+

3. Were you born in the United States? (circle one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - i. If no, what country _____
 - ii. How many years have you lived in the United States?
(Circle one)

1. 0-2	5. 12-15
2. 3-5	6. 15-20
3. 6-8	7. 21-25
4. 9-12	8. 26+

4. Are you currently a citizen of the United States? (circle one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - i. If no, are you (circle one)
 1. A permanent resident
 2. A visa or work permit holder
 3. Undocumented

5. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school? (circle one)
- a. None, or grade 1-8
 - b. High school incomplete (grade 9-11)
 - c. High school graduate
 - d. GED
 - e. Some College
 - f. Technical or vocational school after high school
 - g. College graduate
 - h. Post graduate training or professional schooling after college
6. Are you, (circle one)
- a. Married
 - b. Divorced
 - c. Separated
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Never been married
7. How many dependents (counting yourself) live in your household?
(circle one)
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. 6
 - g. 7
 - h. 8
 - i. 9
 - j. 10+
8. What language did you grow up speaking? (circle one)
- a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Other, _____

9. What language do you usually speak at home? (circle one)
- a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Other, _____
10. Are you able to read a newspaper or book in English? (circle one)
- a. Very well
 - b. Pretty well
 - c. Just a little
 - d. Not at all
11. What is your employment status? (circle one)
- a. Employed full-time
 - b. Employed part-time
 - c. Home maker or stay-at-home parent
 - d. Retired
 - e. Student
 - f. Unemployed
 - g. Laid off
 - h. Disabled
12. What is your combined household income is? (Circle One)
- a. Less than \$15,315
 - b. \$15,315 but less than \$25,535
 - c. \$25,535 but less than \$30,975
 - d. \$30,975 but less than \$36,195
 - e. \$36,175 but less than \$41,635
 - f. \$41,635 but less than \$46, 635
 - g. \$46,635 but less than \$51, 855
 - h. \$51,855 +
13. Were ever affiliated with a religion in the past, including as a child?
(Circle One)
- a. No (skip to question 15)
 - b. Yes

i. If yes, was that (Circle all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Catholic | 5. Mormon |
| 2. Evangelical | 6. Jewish |
| 3. Protestant | 7. Muslim |
| Christian | 8. Orthodox church |
| 4. Jehovah's | 9. Other |
| Witness | _____ |

14. How important would you say this religion was in your own life?

(Circle one)

- a. Very important
- b. Fairly important
- c. Not very important

15. Are you affiliated with a particular religion now? (Circle One)

- a. No (Skip to question 17)
- b. Yes

i. If yes, is that (Circle all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Catholic | 5. Mormon |
| 2. Evangelical | 6. Jewish |
| 3. Protestant | 7. Muslim |
| Christian | 8. Orthodox church |
| 4. Jehovah's | 9. Other |
| Witness | _____ |

16. How many years have you been affiliated with your current religion?

- | | |
|--------|----------|
| a. 0-2 | d. 9-12 |
| b. 3-5 | e. 12-15 |
| c. 6-8 | f. 15-25 |

g. 26+

17. Which do you identify yourself with first, (Circle one)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| a. Your ethnicity | c. Your religion |
| b. Your nationality | d. An American |

18. How did you hear about your current church? (Circle all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| a. Family member | d. Through the radio,
television or flyer |
| b. From a friend | |
| c. From a member of
the church | |

19. Why are you affiliated with this church now? (Circle one in each section)

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Because of marriage | e. Because it reminds
you of your
homeland? |
| i. Yes | i. Yes |
| ii. No | ii. No |
| b. Because you wanted
to meet people? | f. Because of the
services the church
provides? |
| i. Yes | i. No |
| ii. No | ii. Yes |
| c. Because you were
inspired by a pastor? | g. Because you felt
lonely? |
| i. Yes | i. Yes |
| ii. No | ii. No |
| d. Because you wanted
to join a community
of people? | |
| i. Yes | |
| ii. No | |

h. Because you wanted a direct personal experience with God?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

i. Because of the activities the church provides?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

20. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (Circle one)

- a. More than three times a week
- b. More than once a week
- c. Once a week

- d. Once or twice a month
- e. A few times a year
- f. Seldom
- g. Never

21. How important would you say religion is in your own life now? (Circle one)

- a. Very important
- b. Fairly important
- c. Not very important

22. Have you received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? (Circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. Have you ever been involved or served in with the following activities, (circle all that apply)

- a. Choir/band
- b. Small group or ministry
- c. Religious counseling
- d. Bible study group
- e. Sunday school
- f. Volunteering

24. How often do you pray at home? (Circle one)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Everyday | e. A few times a year |
| b. A few times a week | f. Seldom |
| c. At least once a week | g. Never |
| d. Once or twice a month | |

25. Do you have a crucifix or other religious objects displayed in your home? (Circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

26. Do you ever pray to specific saints or to the Virgin Mary to ask for help when you face difficult moments in your life? (Circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

27. How welcoming is the United States to new immigrants? (Circle one)

- a. Very welcoming
- b. A little welcoming
- c. Not welcoming

28. How welcoming is the city you live in to new immigrants? (Circle one)

- a. Very welcoming
- b. A little welcoming
- c. Not welcoming

29. Do you think discrimination against immigrants is a major problem in the city you currently live in? (Circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

30. Which comes closer to your views? The growing numbers of new Latino immigrants threaten your customs and values, or the growing numbers of new Latino immigrants strengthen your customs and values? (Circle one)
- a. Threaten
 - b. Strengthen

2. Participant Consent Form

Motivation and the Role of Religious Participation in the lives of Latino Immigrants in Two Cities in Kansas: A Comparative Case Study of Garden City and Syracuse

Participant Consent and Authorization Form:

The Department of International Studies at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Purpose of the Study:

To investigate the motivators and the role that religion plays in the lives of Latino immigrants in Kansas by systematically comparing data gathered through interviews and surveys in two cities in Kansas: Syracuse and Garden City.

Information to be collected:

Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. With your permission I will ask you a series of questions, you may choose to at any time not answer a question that you don't feel comfortable with. With your permission I would like to tape record our conversation. Upon completion of my study I will keep the recordings for future research, however, no one but the researchers will have access to the tapes. In addition the information gathered

in this study may be shown to the University of Kansas, Lawrence and Edwards Campus. The researchers will not share information about you with anyone not specified above unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Participant Certification:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that the interview will last around 30 minutes and if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email dhann@ku.edu or mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

----- (Print) Participant's Name	----- Participant's Signature	----- Date
--	---	----------------------

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3. Pastor Interview Guide

1. How did this congregation begin?
2. How did you become the pastor for the congregation?
3. Why did you become the pastor of this congregation?
4. How many members does the church have?
5. How many people generally attend?
6. In what language is the service given?
7. In your opinion, what are some of the biggest concerns of your church members?
8. What activities does the church offer?
 - a. How many times a week?
 - b. Is food provided?
 - c. Are they well attended?
9. Does the church offer services to help newcomers?
10. In your opinion, is there an anti-immigrant sentiment in the city you live in?

4. Congregant Interview Guide

1. When and how did you hear about this congregation?
2. Have you always attended a Spanish Evangelical church?
 - a. If yes, what do you like about the Evangelical church?
 - b. If no, did you attend another church in the past?
 - c. If yes, what was it and why did you convert?
3. How welcoming do you feel this church is to Latinos?
 - a. Newcomers?
4. How often do you attend church services?
5. Are you involved in the church, if so, how?
6. What other services does this church offer to members?
 - a. How many times a week?
7. Why did you decide to participate in this religion?
8. In your opinion, what are some of the biggest concerns of your fellow church members?
9. In your opinion, is there anti-immigrant sentiment in the city you live in?
10. If so, does this make you feel alienated?
 - a. Lonely or make you miss home more?

5. Human Subjects Approval

3/5/2008
HSCL #17196
Katherine Acosta
5011 Rosewood
Roeland Park, KS 66205

The Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL) has received your response to its expedited review of your research project

17196 Acosta/Obadare (INTERNATIONAL STUDIES) Motivation for Religious Participation in the Lives of Latino Immigrants in Two Cities in Kansas: A Comparative Case Study of Syracuse and Garden City and approved this project under the expedited procedure provided in 45 CFR 46.110 (f) (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Office for Human Research Protections requires that your consent form must include the note of HSCL approval and expiration date, which has been entered on the consent form(s) sent back to you with this approval.

1. At designated intervals until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the HSCL office.
2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at http://www.rcr.ku.edu/hscl/hsp_tutorial/ooo.shtml.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the Committee immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform HSCL when this project is terminated. You must also provide HSCL with an annual status report to maintain HSCL approval. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from HSCL one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

David Hann
Coordinator
Human Subjects Committee Lawrence
cc: Ebenezer Obadare

Appendix B

1. Transcribed Interviews: *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Date: 03-07-08

Start time: 1:25 P.M.

End Time: 1:50 P.M.

Participant: Pastor, Male, English and Spanish

Interview with Pastor of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How was this congregation formed?

Richard Perez: We started about three years ago, we felt, Fellowship Baptist church that is, the mother church you could say, a good need for a new Hispanic Evangelical congregation. They wanted me to be the point man or the contact manager to start it and we did it. We had the full approval of the congregation and we did it, we started with just about 12 or 14 charter members and three years later we have grown into a full fledged congregation.

K.A.: So the church called upon you to start the congregation.

R.P.: Yes, I was contacted by the church board and the pastor, and I said yes.

K.A.: How many members attend your congregation?

R.P.: Okay, well I would say that we have a membership of about 140 people and I would say that 90 come faithfully, this includes children off course.

K.A.: What would you say the demographics of the church are?

R.P.: I'd say that 75% of our parishioners are Mexican nationals and another 20% would be Mexican-Americans, so Chicanos having Mexican ancestry of

2nd and 3rd generations here, we also have a good demographic of Peruvians and we have folks from Cuba, Belize and folks from El Salvador.

K.A.: In what language are the publishing's of the congregations?

R.P.: Spanish, all of our services are conducted in Spanish.

K.A.: Is that always consistent?

R.P.: Well, we have bilingual services when the Anglos and the Hispanics decide to get together; we do it about every three months. We have a Hispanic/Anglo service and it's really one of the highlights of the year. It's a really neat dynamic when both congregations get together. It's pretty neat, really.

K.A.: How does that work?

R.P.: Okay well, we have members from both congregations, English and Spanish speaking people and we have music in both languages and we have preaching in both languages. I would either preach myself in English and Spanish simultaneously or pastor Mike [of Fellowship Baptist church], since he does not speak Spanish he would preach and I would just repeat what he said in Spanish.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the reasons or the motivations for the participations of your members in this church?

R.P.: I'd like to think, and here comes a little of self-indulgence, but I think we have good teaching here. They enjoy the teachings of the Bible, one of the things I try to focus on here is expository preaching which means a verse by

verse study of the Bible, and I think that make us a little different than the other churches. Other churches have their fortes and I think ours would be the teaching and preaching of the Bible verse by verse, or at least this is what I have heard is one of the main reasons why they come.

K.A.: Do you find that there are many converts in your church?

R.P.: Overwhelmingly yes, mostly from Catholicism.

K.A.: Okay, in your opinion, what are the biggest concerns that your congregation faces?

R.P.: Inside of the church, I would say, since we are part of an English mother church they might feel concerned about racism by some of the English speaking people, not that there is, but they might sense that anyway. The Hispanic immigrant that comes to this country especially not knowing the language might feel that they are unable to communicate, and which they really can't and that makes them feel really intimidated is the word I am looking for, so they specially feel intimidated sharing a church building with Anglos, that's inside and outside I would say a lot or a good percentage of the people I pastor are not of legal status and that really is a pressure for them living here, so those are the big concerns.

K.A.: What type of activities does your congregation/church provide?

R.P.: We try and get together every two to three months to have a dinner after the service, we have those dinners so that it's time to just get together to talk in a very informal level, we have women's groups and men's groups,

where the men and women get together exclusively amongst themselves and they decide what activities they want to have whether its going to a restaurant or a park or going bowling, I leave that up to each leader. We also have youth activities, youth activities are really neat because we have intercultural youth groups where there are kids that are Hispanic and kids that are Anglo and they get together every Wednesday at 7 P.M. and they have an intercultural group and it has worked quite nicely so far since most of the Hispanic youth speak English.

K.A.: Would you say that the congregation as a whole, save the youth, has a good grasp of the language or not?

R.P.: That's a good question, I have not conducted any formal surveys on that, but I would guess that most of our folks speak Spanish only and that they just speak English and that it's probably broken. I do have some that are fluent, but that's the exception no the rule. Oh wait, I forgot we also have a class on Mondays that was developed a few years ago called, the Bible in its Totality, and what we do is I give a brief summary of every book of the Bible. That is a formal class, we take one book a Monday and give a synopsis, and it's more than a Bible study because there is homework and quizzes involved. Most of the people, about 12-14 people, will graduate in May; it's like my way of developing my dreams to be a professor someday so I'm doing it here.

K.A.: How would you describe the culture of the church?

R.P.: It's very laid back; it's very open and welcoming. As a matter of fact, if we talk about publications or advertisements one of the many tools we use to connect the people who visit us with what's going on with the church are bulletins that we pass out Sunday Mornings, and I can give you a copy of one of those examples, there is a picture of my wife and I and right next to it is like a brief hello to those that visit us and I want to make clear that I want people that come in here and visit us to know that we accept them the way they are. If there are going to be any changes, God is going to make those changes, but they are welcome to come the way they are and we don't want them to feel like this is a church where you need to change in order to be accepted so that is something that I try to stress.

K.A.: Do you ever provide services for people in need?

R.P.: Yes we do, we provide food, and we also have money to distribute to those who are in need.

K.A.: Do you provide food at different events?

R.P.: Yes, people usually volunteer to bring their favorite dishes from their country so we get to taste a variety of different cultures.

K.A.: How many people attend these added these events?

R.P.: Well it depends on how we promote it. A lot of the attendance depends on the promotion, I don't think I am ever satisfied with the participation, but our main event is our Sunday morning preaching service, that's very well attended. Once a week on Wednesdays we probably have 1/4 of the people that

come on Sunday mornings, that's probably attributed to different things, people are busy, they have children in extra-curricular activities, whatever the case, but our most attended service is Sunday morning.

K.A.: Shifting gears a bit, would you say that your church offers assistance to newly arrived immigrants?

R.P: No we don't.

K.A.: But you did say that you provide assistance to needy families.

R.P: Yes, we have a person that is on top of that and if word comes to his ear that there is a family that is need financially we will just pick up a spontaneous offering, and sometimes that is channeled through our mother church, if there is a person that is having trouble paying their electric bill or gas bill we do have a budget that will address these things and we will take from our budget and then pay those.

K.A.: In your opinion, is there an anti-immigrant sentiment in Garden City?

R.P: Yes, I do.

K.A.: Can you talk a little more about why you feel that?

R.P: I do, I feel because there have been occasions that I have gone with parishioners to a restaurant, to a bank, to a post-office, and I can sense not only by facial expressions, by the things they said with me being present. I have been present on occasions that I have seen anti-immigration attitudes towards these wonderful people and I have been there with them when it happened. I'll give you an example, last week I invited one of our parishioners

to have lunch at a pretty nice place here in town, and he himself was kind of sheepish about going because it's a place where not many Hispanics frequent, but my wife and I really enjoy it, so I was like come on let's go, so we went. You could tell the difference in service and attention, so yeah; I have been there when it happens.

K.A.: I did some work in Syracuse years back and found that there was a spatial separation between the Latino community and the Anglo community; would you say that this occurs here?

R.P.: I do, I really, really do. There is a tremendous difference, philosophy of thinking when it comes to the family nucleus, even spending habits, it's a lot different. I think that it might change with generations, I am not sure, I bet there are studies on that, you may have done that yourself, but I think the longer the Hispanics stay here, they tend to adopt a lot of the American way of thinking, but when it comes to the racial issue I think it's really prominent, I do because I sense it. I have been there and I can't even tell you how many times they have called me upset with those things. Now I do encourage them to make an effort to blend and educate themselves because that will help.

K.A.: So you feel that this is a problem within the congregation?

R.P.: Absolutely I do.

K.A.: Do you sense this within the two churches in this building?

R.P.: I think that for the vast majority of the church it's not, but there are some families, and it works both sides. A lot of the Hispanics sometimes like

to talk about the racism, but I have noticed that Hispanics can also have some racial biases towards the Anglos. It really goes both ways.

K.A.: Do you believe that there is any racism within the Latino congregation?

R.P.: Yes, funny that you say that, because I really think so. Within the Latino family there is a subculture, between Hispanics that are first-generation. I'll give you an example of a church I used to pastor a few years ago. So in this church and here too, there are Hispanics, I'll use Mexicans as an example. There are some Mexicans that come from Mexico and are here now their children are born here, there are Mexican that are Mexican-American that have been here for many generations who have adopted the language. They are Hispanics that speak more English than Spanish, so they are pretty Americanized. The Mexicans come with fears and they don't understand each other sometimes. So within those groups there is a rivalry, I have seen accusations of not being a pure Mexican, and then the Mexican-Americans think that recently arrived immigrants are less worthy because they have not adapted or that they are not financially where they are right now, or because they feel they are in a weird way superior because they have been here longer so yes, there is a conflict between Latinos, absolutely.

K.A.: What role do you feel the church plays in the lives of the congregation?

R.P.: I think that for a lot of our congregation their lives revolve around the church and church activities. Especially those who are in charge of a certain part of the church, they have made friends in the church and they are friends

in and out of church. It all boils down to how often they come, if you were to survey how often do you come to church, those families that come to church often have friendships and deep roots within the church and they come often. So I would venture to say that most of their lives revolve around the church. Now for those who come seldom, they probably have other friends outside of the church who keep them busy and provide them with the fellowship that they would get at the church.

K.A.: Do you celebrate any holidays at the church?

R.P.: I would say we do, but this year we stepped away from that a bit and some people were a little upset about that and weren't happy, but it's hard to make everyone happy. We usually try to celebrate Christmas together or we will try if the holiday lands on a church day we will have it a church, if it doesn't then people will celebrate at home and then we will have something else here on another day. This way it allows people to celebrate with the church family as well.

K.A.: Well, that's all I have, do you have any questions or additional comment?

R.P.: One thing I would add is, what we are doing here at Fellowship Baptist Church is pretty unique, because we are two congregations, two fully functioning congregations and I think that we are the only one in this community that has that here. I think it has a lot with the relationship that Pastor Mike and I have developed through the years. There is the utmost

trust, between both us, and it reflects in everything else that we do, but to have a congregation where you can come in and you can feel comfortable in English or Spanish is pretty rare and for the most part both congregation are excited about starting a multicultural prayer where we will be seeing each other more. Now on Wednesdays we want folks from both congregations to come together and that should be interesting.

K.A.: Great, well thanks so much for your time, I appreciate it!

Duration of interview: 25 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 10:20 A.M.
End Time: 10:45 A.M.
Participant: #1, Female, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: Okay, ready? How did you learn about the congregation that you attend?

Congregant: Through a sister of mine. She invited me and I liked it.

K.A.: And have you always attended an Evangelical church, because that is what *Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida* is right?

C: Yes it is. But I have not always been Evangelical, I used to be Catholic.

K.A.: I see, and what is it that you like about the Evangelical Church?

C: Well, first of all because I realized that Christ had died for me and he gave his life for me and I could feel it and I had never felt it before and now I do, although I could not see it, I felt something special in this church, I felt the presence of the spirit of God.

K.A.: And when you were Catholic, where was that?

C: In Mexico, Torreon, Mexico.

K.A.: Okay, when was it that you converted?

C: Well came to the U.S. in 1993, March 23 and I converted, so I was baptized on May of 1997. I always went to church before the day I was baptized, for like four years, but I wasn't genuine in my participation.

K.A.: Okay, Would you say that Latinos are welcomed at your church?

C: Oh yeah. We are all Latinos that go there so that's a given!

K.A.: and new immigrants?

C: Yes, they too.

K.A.: Do you feel that in both congregations, because you are two churches under one building right?

C: Yes, there is an American service and a Latino one. Well I would say that we are welcome since we are here, but we don't really mingle with them so it's hard to say, I don't have friends there, I mean none of them come to my house for dinner!

K.A.: How many times a week do you spend in church activities?

C: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, then, Sunday, so like four times a week.

K.A.: and when you participate how much time do you spend there?

C: On Mondays I have practice, then, well I would say about 3 hours every time.

K.A.: What do you participate in at church?

C: Well I am in the music group for the church and study groups and my honey is the leader of the choir.

K.A.: Okay, well what do you think people decide to join the church, I mean what are their motivations?

C: In general, for thankfulness that Christ died for us on the cross and we should serve him and try to create a community to serve him, and then to try to talk to the rest of the Garden City community about God.

K.A.: And what drives your participation?

C: Well because I liked the way this church works and the way the pastor gives the message and the way our services focus on the word, and the center of the services is to share the word of our God and that is why I like and participate.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the biggest concerns of the Latinos in the congregation?

C: For people to learn about God.

K.A.: And how about outside of the church?

C: Our Christian life and sharing out testimony. Outside of the Church we worry about our members following the word of God and not doing worldly things, also to tell people how to meet God, so they can find him.

K.A.: Do they worry about anything else, outside of the church?

C: Well for me, my kids, taking them to the park or to Kansas City for Worlds of Fun or just keeping them happy and busy playing.

K.A.: What kind of services does your church provide?

C: Programs for kids, Sunday school for kids and adults, Bible study groups, lots of stuff.

K.A.: Do you participate in these events?

C: I teach the kids' program and I have helped with Sunday school.

K.A.: Is food provided at any of these events?

C: Oh yeah, that's how we get them to come! We have snacks for the kids, cookies and then in *compañerismo* [social activity outside of church] we will bring dishes to a person's house and share.

K.A.: What kinds of foods?

C: Mexican food, Peruvian food, from a lot of different places, but all Latin you know rice, meats, a variety of food.

K.A.: Do you get good attendance at these events?

C: Like 70 people, especially when the pastor announces that there will be food after the service, but in *compañerismo* less because it is someone's house so maybe 15-20 people.

K.A.: Do you have *compañerismo* this Sunday?

C: No, next Sunday, it's every other week.

K.A.: That's nice, and to your knowledge does your church offer any services for newly arrived immigrants?

C: Yes, to new ones or to brothers and sisters in Christ that are in need, so if they need help paying their bills we will take an extra offering of love on Sunday and someone will take it to them at their house. It doesn't matter if they are newly arrived from Mexico or if they have spent a lot of time at the church, just that they need help.

K.A.: Great, okay, again in your opinion, do any anti-immigrant feelings occur in Garden City?

C: I have not found any, but I know that there are feelings out there like most other places, but I haven't seen any. I feel like we get along decent, it's not we are all perfect, but for the language and cultural barriers we are doing well. Now that I am at this church that has both American and Latinos I wave at them and they do it too and if there is a service where I see them I will sit near them so I sort of hang out if we have a joint service. In my neighborhood there are only two Hispanics that live here so my little girl will play with her friend down the street and I'll let her go there and her friends come here so I feel like there is a relationship there. It's not as stretched as my close relationships with my sisters in Christ, but we are cordial. For example, when I moved in I was welcomed and people came to say hello and brought me gifts, it was great!

K.A.: Do you feel that your experience was unique?

C: I would bet it's unique, you can see that we live in a new and nice neighborhood.

K.A.: Yes, your home is beautiful!

C: Thank you, now I don't want to say that it's all perfect here, I mean I don't speak English so when I talk to my neighbors it's with the interpreting of my daughter and usually to make sure that it's okay for her to play there. I feel like since it's a small community that racist things that happen in big cities don't happen here, but keep in mind that I only really hang out with people

from the church so we are all Christian and we all have a positive experience and get along well.

K.A.: Okay, well that is all I have for questions, thank you so much for your time, do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

C: Well no, the only thing is that I really like Garden City and that I really like the comfort of living here compared to Mexico!

Duration of Interview: 25 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 12:00 P.M.
End Time: 12:15 P.M.
Participant: #2, Male, English

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: My first question is how did you learn about the congregation that you now attend?

Congregant: That was because we went to look for a church on a given Sunday and we visited the English congregation and we stayed here and then helped form the Spanish congregation.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical church?

C: No, I started attending an Evangelical church when I met my wife, she introduced me to her faith and we attended a non-denominational church, but before that I was Catholic, but not by conviction, but because I was baptized into it as a child.

K.A.: What is it that you like about the Evangelical churches?

C: I feel that the sermons are a bit more interesting, the worship; I enjoy the fellowship and the dedication to the doctrine.

K.A.: From where and when did you move to the United States?

C: I came from Lima, Peru in 1983.

K.A.: Did you attend a church in Lima?

C: No, not really. I mean weddings, funerals, you know, but not to worship.

K.A.: In the church that you are currently active in, are Latinos welcome?

C: Oh yes, very much so.

K.A.: What about new immigrants?

C: I believe so. We are a Hispanic mission; we are a Hispanic ministry within the Fellowship Baptist Church. They have always been friendly with us and have also welcomed us.

K.A.: How often would you say that you attend church a week?

C: Regularly and at least two times a week.

K.A.: How much time do you spend there when you attend?

C: I would say about two hours or so.

K.A.: Do you participate within the church outside of the services?

C: Yes, Sunday school teacher, I am the pianist of the church, I am also in charge of our radio Evangelist show on Sundays. I speak over the radio that way we can reach lots of other people.

K.A.: Really? And what radio station does it play?

C: F.M.105.9

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the motivators for the participation in your church?

C: Well the motivators for the participation are basically religious or just the basic love for Jesus Christ. Our motivations for joining the church are to find other people that want to spend time spreading his love too. Our goal is to make his work, through the church and to develop here. It's his love for this work that makes us want to participate.

K.A.: What do you think are the biggest concerns that the people in your church have?

C: Well the unity of the church, Satan often times invades the church you know, other than unity I would say evangelism outside of the walls of the church is something not done often, but is a big concern.

K.A.: What types of services does your church offer?

C: We have activities outside of the Sunday service, we have children's Bible school, a woman's and man's group and go bowling and things like that to hang out and eat separated by gender, we celebrate birthdays, Christmas, New Years, Mother's Day in the church, any holiday really.

K.A.: Okay, well how many days a week would you say you go to fellowship?

C: Well I would say there are like 3 different times it's offered.

K.A.: Do you often serve food?

C: Yes, most of the times, usually Latin food.

K.A.: How many people usually attend these events?

C: I would say about 50 people.

K.A.: What importance does your church community play in your life?

C: I would say it's an important part, my family is the most important, but my friends are there and that's where I spend my social time. It's a very important part.

K.A.: Does your church provide any assistance that you know of, to newly arrived immigrants?

C: I don't think so, I know they help people within the church that are in need, but that's it.

K.A.: Okay, this next question is about your church, but also Garden City in general. In your opinion are there anti-immigrant sentiments occurring in Garden City?

C: I would say it exists, but I have not seen it, but I have heard people talk about how bad it is, I just don't know much about it.

K.A.: Others have said that there are two communities within Garden City, the Latino and the Anglo, would you agree?

C: Yes, I think that there is a duality, mostly occurring because of the different language and culture, but mostly because of the different life styles, we don't live the same and that creates confusion and separation. Now within the church it's more obvious since we have both congregations. When we have joined sermons they physically sit in two sides, the American go on one side and we go to the other, so they don't mingle, and well there is cordial feelings, but there are no interactions so there I would say that I notice two communities.

K.A.: Okay, do you have any additional comments about the church or do you have any questions for me?

C: Well a person knows that people know each other, and care about each other, have this love towards each other at our church and that is obvious. I feel that the conflicts here between Americans and Latinos are because they

don't know each other very well, mostly because of the language so people are not greeting each other with open arms, now if we were a bilingual community it would be a different story.

K.A.: Well thank you so much, I really appreciate your time.

C: No problem!

Duration of Interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 7:50 P.M.
End Time: 8:05 P.M.
Participant: #3, Male, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregant: From my brother.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical church?

C: No I used to attend a Catholic church before I lived here.

K.A.: Where did you live before?

C: In Mexico.

K.A.: In what part of Mexico?

C: The Federal District.

K.A.: Okay, and what drove your conversion?

C: Well if I can get you to understand, the religion of my past was unsatisfying and this church provided me with an understanding I needed.

K.A.: Before, in Mexico, when you went to a Catholic church how often would you say you went?

C: Well most Sundays because my parents were taking me.

K.A.: So were you Catholic because of the influence of you family?

C: Oh yes, I was born into it.

K.A.: Okay, thinking about the church that you attend here, do you feel that the newly arriving immigrants are welcomed?

C: Yes, definitely at the Evangelical churches, I can't say that for the other church. I found that they were not so open to people who were new and wanted to join, but most Evangelical churches are.

K.A.: How do you feel about your dual congregation? I mean, since you are in a church that has both an American and Spanish church?

C: Well it's a little odd, we are in the same building, but I don't really see them much. We don't speak the same language and don't share the same tradition so even if we are in the same church we are still like two different congregations, we have different needs.

K.A.: How often would you say that you attend church a week here?

C: I would say about three times a week. I'm part of a group of leaders in the church so I come often.

K.A.: How long do you spend at the church every time you visit?

C: Well I would say about 2-3 hours.

K.A.: Okay, in your opinion, what are some of the reasons or motivations for the participation of people in your church?

C: I think that a lot of people are drawn in by our radio program and they like what they hear so they come to learn and that's why I think that they come.

K.A.: In your opinion, both inside and outside of church, what are some of the biggest concerns of the people in your congregation?

C: Well right now, everyone has different worries depending on their family, for example, if you are talking about the leaders we worry about unity, but it

just depends of who you are talking about. The church as a whole, I would say Evangelism. We have a lot of worries, food for the body and for the mind, work, and just a lot of worries. Outside of the church we worry about the economy and the situation for our kids in the future.

K.A.: What do you like best about your church?

C: Well I would say that the activities they provide for the family, it's a nice time off when we can come to the church, learn about God, hang out with good people that understand us and eat good food. We don't have to worry that the kids that hang out with our kids here are trouble makers and gangsters. It's easy and simple.

K.A.: Do you guys get good attendance at these events?

C: Yes, lot's of people come and I would say we get a consistent 70-80 people at these events.

K.A.: Great, now thinking of your town as a whole, do you believe that there is anti-immigrant sentiment in Garden City?

C: Yes it exists a lot in Garden City, I can't tell you an exact number of incidents, but it exists a lot and it's bad.

K.A.: Do you feel that this is a concern for the people in your church?

C: Yes, definitely. I wouldn't say it's a problem we have, it's just a topic that exists.

K.A.: Okay, well do you have any comments or questions for me?

C: Well, not really. I'm just a little shy.

K.A.: Okay, well thank you so much, I really appreciate it.

C: No problem that wasn't too hard.

Duration of interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 8:10 P.M.
End Time: 8:20 P.M.
Participant: #4, Male, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you hear about this congregation?

Congregant: Well in reality, the church that I am in right now is relatively new and I was notified by the pastor that a new worship was going to be initiated and I joined the mission.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical church?

C: No, I didn't used to attend any other church.

K.A.: Okay, where and when did you come from?

C: From Mexico when I was 21 years old, that was about 12 years ago.

K.A.: When did you start attending church?

C: I seriously started attending about a couple of years after arriving here.

K.A.: Why did you choose this church and religion?

C: Well for the big difference that one feel, for example, the Catholic Church. You don't bring a Bible and it's just repetition and it's not correct, I mean not in accordance to the Bible. Here our pastor uses the Bible as his lesson plan.

K.A.: In your opinion, does your church appear welcoming to all people?

C: Yes, everyone is welcome in our church, EVERYONE.

K.A.: Okay, your congregation is within another do you feel that they are welcoming?

C: Off course.

K.A.: How often would you say that you participate in church activities a week?

C: I would say daily, we are always there.

K.A.: How many hours do you spend at the church?

C: Well it depends if we do visitations, but on average I would say at least two hours a day.

K.A.: Okay, in general, what role, maybe in a percentage, does the church play in your life?

C: My life completely revolves around the church, completely. 100%.

K.A.: What do you think drives the participation in your church, what motivates people to join?

C: Because they need the love of God, because of the focus on the doctrine. In general, I think that style of our pastor and that's what draws them too.

K.A.: In general, inside and outside of church what do you feel are the biggest concerns of the people of the church?

C: The people that don't know Jesus Christ.

K.A.: and outside of church?

C: The people that don't know Jesus.

K.A.: About how many people do you think attend during the weekly activities?

C: I would say that, I mean Sunday is obviously our biggest day, but only like 8% attend during the week.

K.A.: In your opinion, in Garden City do you believe that there exist and anti-immigrant sentiment?

C: No.

K.A.: What about the United States as a whole?

C: Yes.

K.A.: Okay, well do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

C: Yes, that I would like the people learn more about God and realize that immigrants are coming to the United States, but to do good not bad.

K.A.: Thank you so much.

C: There is not a problem.

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 8:10 P.M.
End Time: 8:20 P.M.
Participant: #5, Female, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you hear about your congregation?

Congregant: We were invited we the church was being formed.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical Church?

C: Yes, since I was born. My sisters and I were raised in a Christian home, an Evangelical home.

K.A.: Where did you come from?

C: Mexico.

K.A.: How often did you attend church in Mexico?

C: I went about 3 times a week?

K.A.: How about now?

C: Now, well probably at lease 4 times, I have lots of kids so I have to stay home sometimes!

K.A.: How many hours would you say that you spend in the church?

C: Well that's hard to say but, around 10-12 hours spent a week there.

K.A.: What attracted you to the Evangelical movement?

C: What's special for me is different than most because I grew up in it, but principally for me, what I like is that they teach what the Bible says and it's not just because I grew up in a Christian home, but because I truly believe what the Bible says and literally. We need to follow what Jesus Christ left us,

and what I also like is the fellowship that we have, we are all here to serve him, a God that is love and who left us a book to follow.

K.A.: In general, what role does the church play in your life?

C: Well the majority of my friends are in the church, but a few go to other churches. Well there are couples, well one that doesn't go to church, but I have known them for a long time. For the most part I spend my time with the people of the church and in the church.

K.A.: Do participate in any leadership roles in the church?

C: Yes, I am in charge sometimes of the day care and sometimes lead the women's group.

K.A.: Okay, this is in general, in your opinion, what is the motivation for the participation of people that come to the church?

C: Not sure, but I would say the church has grown rapidly because it's clear that our church values the love of God and our principal worry is showing the love of Jesus Christ. The love of Christ will lead us to show others the love of him. Our church really tries to show the visitors this change in our lives.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the biggest concerns of the members of your church?

C: Well we worry about what message our church sends, that we follow the principal. We worry about the people that come and then stop coming and wondering what impeded them from coming.

K.A.: What about of the life in Garden City?

C: I would say that outside of the church has to do with work, our homes, our kids, but mostly the others worry about daily living, not having enough money or the people that are not really Christian really worry more about themselves, they worry about today and me, me, me, and don't think of tomorrow. They want to have fun, but leave God for the last part of their day or week.

K.A.: Okay, in general, how long have you lived in Garden City?

C: About 14 years?

K.A.: Okay, well do you feel that exist anti-immigrant sentiments here?

C: I think there are.

K.A.: Have you experienced it, or seen it?

C: I have not seen it, but I have heard it.

K.A.: Some people have stated that there are two communities within Garden City, would you agree?

C: I think so; there are the Hispanics on one side and the Americans on the other. For example, when you see a party or activity it's not a mixture of people, it's just Latinos or just Americans.

K.A.: Does this carry on to your church?

C: Well yes, we have both Latinos and Americans and it happens a lot here. I am a leader here and I don't even talk to them, so I assume other than the pastor, no one else does either.

K.A.: Well that's all I have, do you have any additional comments or questions?

C: No Katherine, I don't.

K.A.: Well thank you so much for your help.

C: Don't worry.

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 11:20 P.M.
End Time: 11:45 A.M.
Participant: #6, Female, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How is that you hear about your church?

Congregant: Through some friends that we had here before we arrived.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical Church?

C: No, I am and have been Catholic all my life.

K.A.: What are some of the reasons for why you attend the *Iglesia Nueva Vida*?

C: Well I would say that I primarily attend because we have friends that go there and they invite us and then we made more friends there and it's a nice way to hang out with them.

K.A.: Now where did you come from?

C: From Peru.

K.A.: How often did you attend you Catholic Church in Peru?

C: Normally we went a minimum of two times a month, one Sunday mass and then we were part of a small group.

K.A.: Would you consider yourself a convert?

C: No I never stopped being Catholic nor have I adopted another doctrine, but I am a Christian so I feel okay attending a non-Catholic church since we like seeing our friends there.

K.A.: Do you feel that Latinos are welcomed in your church?

C: Yes.

K.A.: How about the church as a whole?

C: I would say normally, I can't say 100%, but from my perception they don't mind us because we give a lot of offerings so it helps their church.

K.A.: How often do you participate in church here?

C: Well I am not as religious as I would like to be, usually it's random. Like I said, we are Catholic so when we go to church it's not a familiar doctrine, we go for our kids to play with the other kids that they like, and we get time to hang out with other adults, our friends. There is an underlying pressure for us to convert, but it's not for us.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the motivator for the participation in the church?

C: Well I would say particularly in this church because they identify well with the church. The newly arrived people, mostly or probably, like my case; they attend because they need to be near people that are similar. Maybe that's the case for the other people that visit; I would say that the church invites a lot of the people in need. When you come here and know no one it's good to have a fraternity of people that you can rely on. For example, once I needed a babysitter because I had to work last minute, my close friends were out of town and so I called one of the ladies from the church that doesn't work and she was able to help me out. I don't really know her but it was nice because I

knew since she was from the church that I didn't have to worry about whether she was going to be bad to them!

K.A.: Do you think that this carries across to other churches?

C: Well I have been to two other churches, another Baptist church that I was invited to and the Spanish Catholic church. I would say the other Baptist church has 80% of the members are devoted to the congregation and the remainder are visitors needing something, whether its help from the church or God. I have randomly attended the Catholic Church, but we don't know everyone there so it's like we are strangers, they haven't really extended a warm welcome to us so we have attended for this reason. I would say that people attend there because they like it, but for us it's the tradition, but it's also going to church for the kids and the activities. We work a lot and both work in places where we don't talk much because we don't speak English so by the time Sunday comes we are ready to do something with people who speak Spanish. The people that go to the Catholic Church don't hang out after mass so for us it's not getting what we need right now.

K.A.: In your opinion what are some of the biggest concerns of the people in Garden City?

C: For example, I mean according to what I think. I feel that one of the necessities is the legalization and it's one of the motivations for why people go to church here. It's another way to socialize with other people, some of them seek a refuge in the church a security and to share or coexist in a city, with

Latinos, where we live in hiding. We know that the people at this church don't look at us like we are odd because we are illegal.

K.A.: In your opinion, in Garden City, in general are there anti-immigrant sentiments?

C: Thank God, I have not felt in general a conflict, but there are cases where American and even Hispanics that look at you differently for being Latino and when they realize that you are recently arrived.

K.A.: Some people have expressed a separation between Latinos and Americans in Garden City, would you agree?

C: I believe that it's this way, but not necessarily because Americans put up a barrier; you know we are here you go there, but I think we all choose to separate. I know few people that are Latino that have lived here through their life, they don't try to enter the world of the Americans or that have tried to adapt to their way of life. It's on the contrary, the adult people that come here conserve their own customs and they separate themselves, so I don't know them if they exist. Inclusive, people that have been here for a long time have continued and like to separate themselves and only hang out with Latinos. When I have gotten the chance to hang out in the American world a bit, rarely, but if we run across people at the church they have been kind. Granted it's not been impeded for me to hang out with Americans, but I don't really know any and so we don't make friends.

K.A.: What services does the church you attend provide?

C: Well the *Iglesia Nueva Vida*, well in my case, it's the pure sense as a human being of having to be relational, or not even that but sometimes you feel the need to be surrounded around people. To converse or even just hear conversations, for example in my case I don't share many of, you know we are Hispanics, but we are not Mexican so we don't even share the same customs, but the church has served us to learn about the Mexican culture. However, one of the main reasons why we attend is the simple fact of needing to get together with other people that speak at least the same language even if we don't share the exact same customs with the others. For most people though, they are Mexican and most of the church is Mexican so they share a lot in common.

K.A.: Well that's all I have, do you have any questions? Or comments?

C: No, that went by fast!

K.A.: It did, it was like 20 minutes.

C: Really? Wow, can't believe it, well you made it easy!

K.A.: Oh, thank you!

Duration of interview: 25 minutes

Date: 03-07-08
Start time: 11:50 P.M.
End Time: 12:05 P.M.
Participant: #7, Male, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you hear about the church you attend?

Congregant: Well I heard about it from a friend from work.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical church?

C: No I am Catholic, but I have been here for 5 years and it's because of the friends that I know here and that I have attended there for 5 years, but I am really Catholic.

K.A.: Have you attended a Catholic church here that is in Spanish?

C: Yes, we have gone, but, you know really at the beginning and to compare it to Peru, but in Peru we practice religion very differently. It's a community; here it's just church so that's why we have to decide to stay with *Iglesia Nueva Vida*. The Catholic Church here is of the past, and that's even considering that Peru is a developing country full of patriarchal traditions, but the Catholic Church is more progressive there, not here, so this is really the main reason we attend this church because it's closer in fellowship even though it's completely different in doctrine.

K.A.: In Peru, how often did you attend church?

C: I would say around, well the first years of my marriage not so regularly, but later more often for the kids. Then we attended about every Sunday and got a

bit more involved with the people and maybe went to another lecture in the week, but usually once a week.

K.A.: How often do you attend now?

C: This year it's gone down a bit because I have been working on Sundays and my wife does not like to go alone, but when we get a chance we go, but I would say like 2 times a month. I mean if you would have asked me two months ago I would have said every Sunday.

K.A.: Now in general in Garden City, do you feel that Latinos are welcomed?

C: Well all the interaction I have had is with Latinos, so I don't really know well, but I would assume.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the motivators for church participation here, of Latinos?

C: Well that's a really tough question and I am a little uncomfortable saying because is a touchy subject, but I would say that Latinos are looking for something missing in their life here. Something that is incomplete about them and I think they try to find it in church. I think everyone in church is looking for a group of people to fill the void for something; we go to this church because we have not found a Catholic one we like. Now we have thought about an English congregation, but we stay here for the language and because of the difference of lifestyles Latinos have. So I look for Hispanic people because I am Hispanic, and I would assume that's the case for most people.

K.A.: What do you think are the biggest concerns of the people in the church?
Or of Latinos in Garden City?

C: Something in general would be education, for the kids. Money, a lot of people come here and well me too, but my concern is the abundance of consumption here, and for what? I have seen a lot of time here where they live in an old mobile home, but they have a brand new truck parked outside. So what is the purpose, they worry about having things to show off, maybe something nice to drive to Mexico in and show off. I don't know, for me it's to have a tranquil family and well educated kids.

K.A.: In general, do you feel like there is an anti-immigrant sentiment in Garden city?

C: I have not felt it. Now anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican and Latino is not the same, well not in my eyes, granted that for Americans we are all just the same, but, what was the question again?

K.A.: Have you felt that there are anti-immigrant feelings or anti-Latinos/Mexicans here?

C: I have not experienced, but I have heard from a lot of people that I converse with that have gone through that a lot and it's sad.

K.A.: Do you feel that there is a cultural or ethnic separation that occurs in Garden City?

C: I would say that there is a clear separation, naturally the Mexicans want to hang out with the Mexicans and so on, so it happens naturally, but even for

those who speak English they don't socialize with Americans so it's more than just the language, but I'm not sure what it is.

K.A.: Okay, well that's all that I have, do you have any additional comments or questions?

C: No.

Duration of interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 9:20 A.M.
End Time: 9:25 A.M.
Participant: Congregant #8, Female, English

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you find out about your church?

Congregant: Through family and I knew the pastor. I knew that the church was here before, but didn't come. But then decided to come after being invited and liked it more and more.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical church?

C: Oh yes, but back in Texas.

K.A.: Why do you like the Evangelical church?

C: Because we praise God and have a closer relationship with God and that really gets me excited about coming to church.

K.A.: Do you feel that Latinos are welcomed in Garden City and in the churches?

C: Yes, I think so, I mean from what I know.

K.A.: How often did you used to go to church in Texas?

C: Well it varied because I had more friends outside of the church then, but I would say maybe twice.

K.A.: How many hours do you think you spent a week?

C: Oh, about two hours total a week.

K.A.: What role does the church play in your life now?

C: A huge role, we spend about three or more times here and spend 2-3 hours here every time. We have friends here and so it's easy to stick around for an hour even after the service.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the motivations for why people come to your church?

C: We are closer to the Bible than most churches and we have a good pastor and people like to listen to him and that makes a difference.

K.A.: What are the biggest concerns that the people of that congregation have?

C: School for kids, that they have a job, that they can feed their family, to be a good person for their kids to emulate.

K.A.: What kind of activities does your church offer?

C: Ladies meetings where we can get together to have revivals.

K.A.: Do you ever have food at these events?

C: Yes, usually we will do a pot style so people bring dishes so that the church doesn't have to spend the money.

K.A.: In your opinion, are there any anti-immigrant sentiments here?

C: I would say maybe rarely.

K.A.: Do you feel that there exist a separation between Latinos and American?

C: Yes, I think there is, but that's always been the case. I see that everywhere not just here. This town is a little prejudice, specially, the managers of

Hispanic workers, but that's always been that way. It's not going to change. You know. I just keep going to church, minding my own business and hope it disappears.

K.A.: Well that's all I have, do you have any questions or additional comments?

C: No, thank you sister.

Duration of interview: 5 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 9:40 A.M.
End Time: 9:50 A.M.
Participant: Congregant #9, Male, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you hear about your congregation?

Congregant: I started coming here because my wife attended here and to make her happy I would come, but I thought that everyone that attended was crazy, but then I realized that everything happens through God.

K.A.: Have you only ever attended an Evangelical church?

C: No, I used to say I was Catholic. You know we are all tied to the Mexican tradition that keeps us saying that we are Catholic when we don't even go to church. It's passed down from our parents and the family

K.A.: What is it that you like about this church?

C: They received us really well, people were really friendly, and it was a nice atmosphere. People in this small town were not friendly, I mean the Americans, and it was nice to have people treat you like family when they didn't even know you. Then I started liking it because of what they actually preached.

K.A.: Is that why you converted?

C: Well here is the thing, in the Catholic Church you don't know the person that is sitting next to you, they are strangers and they will continue to be strangers every time you go there, here they showed us the love of God by

welcoming us like family. You know it's an attitude, they invited us to their houses, they let us know that they wanted us there and it kept us coming back. It was the light of God that shined through them.

K.A.: How often do you go to church now?

C: Well at least 3-4 times a week, so all the times they offer it.

K.A.: How much time or hours do you spend in the church?

C: Like 2-3 hours.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the reasons that people join the church?

C: Well if they are like me then they start off by liking the way they treat you and the way that you feel at home here, but then you start coming because there is a change in you life, and I learned this change. None of my friends in Mexico would recognize me now, if they saw me now they would want to change too.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the biggest concerns of the people in your congregation?

C: That our church grows, Evangelism.

K.A.: How long have you lived in the United States?

C: Eight years.

K.A.: In that time, have you felt that there is anti-immigrant sentiment in Garden City?

C: I hear the racism.

K.A.: I'm not sure that I understand.

C: I'm a trucker, so when I drive I listen and I hear the other truckers or the police say racist things, calling us "beaners", or calling our homes the "taco house," it's bad. I didn't expect that when I came, but it's something that I battle with everyday. My lady works hard and she gets underpaid and abused, but she has to do it so that we can pay the bills. It's racism, you don't see all the Americans working as hard as we have to or getting paid so little. The cops think that we are all illegal and they threaten you, even if you are Christian in their eye we are all the same and that's a real problem.

K.A.: Some people have expressed that there is an obvious separation here in Garden City, between the Latinos and the Americans, would you agree?

C: Oh yeah, it's two different worlds, you go to one part of town and for blocks it's only Mexicans and you can do the same for the Americans, the only difference is that we are 1/2 the town and we all live in a little area. They get the whole town, but we are expanding. Honestly I'm okay with that, we should not force these things. Our church is starting these services where we combine the churches and I don't like it. Half the time is spent listening to a mass in English, so you only get 1/2 the message that you would get in a regular mass. I don't know if they are trying to save on the energy bill and want to close the church earlier, but I don't think it's natural. The Americans sit on one side and we sit on the other. So then they listen and then we listen and both pastors stand up there, why don't we just separate and learn more!

K.A.: I see, do you find racism within the church?

C: I hate to say it, but I think so. People always tend to look down to you, you know, it makes me feel uncomfortable and it's a barrier that will always be there, and no one can get rid of it. Well, maybe God!

K.A.: Well, that's all I have, do you have any questions or additional comments?

C: No just keep studying and come back to keep making the community better.

K.A.: I'll try!

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 10:00 P.M.
End Time: 10:05 P.M.
Participant: #10, Female, Spanish

Interview with Congregant of *Iglesia Nueva Vida*

Katherine Acosta: How did you hear about this church?

Congregants: I came here from Texas and some of our friends came here so they told us about it, but we originally came because my husband lost his job and we know there was work here for both of us.

K.A: Where you born in Texas?

C: No, we came from El Salvador about 12 years ago.

K.A: Have you always attended a similar congregation?

C: No, honey I used to be as Catholic as you get them.

K.A: Why did you convert? Or have you?

C: Well it took a lot of friends and seeing the work of God manifested but eventually I felt it and would not change my experience for the world. It happened for a reason.

K.A: How often did you go to church as a Catholic?

C: Depended on how big the party the night before was! Just kidding, but not really. Probably about 2 times a month, or 3 on a good month.

K.A: And how often do you go now?

C: As many times as I can. I come every other Sunday, because I work, but all Wednesday nights and then again on Monday nights. I also do fellowship when I can. It just depends on my work schedule.

K.A: Could you average about how many hours you spend a week?

C: About 3 hours a week at least, but up to 6 if I don't work on Sunday because I can go to the day and night activity.

K.A: What are some of the motivations driving participation in your church?

C: I would say that it's how they use the Bible. It's not just the pastor telling me what he thinks, it's the Bible. I can see it with my own eyes as he reads it so it's a lot of active learning.

K.A: In your opinion, what are some of the biggest concerns of the members of the congregation?

C: The gas prices and the economy! I keep making the same amount of money and everything still cost more and more everyday. I would say that we worry about the church and how we can make it through these hard times. Everyone keeps saying that our offerings need to go up, but we don't have more to give so that's a concern.

K.A: In your opinion, are there anti-immigrant sentiments in Garden City?

C: Yes. I used to work at Wal-Mart and people used to treat me like I was trash. I don't speak a lot of English, but the rudeness was unbearable and it's wasn't just me, lots of us quit. The way the customers used to talk to us and they way they looked at us as if we didn't belong there. It's not like we do anything to corrupt the town, but they feel like we do so the only thing left to do is to let them think that and live on because if you let it bother you then you create a hell for yourself.

K.A: That's all I have, do you have any questions for me or additional comments?

C: Not really.

Duration of interview: 5 minutes

2. Transcribed Interviews: *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Date: 03-08-08

Start time: 9:25 A.M.

End Time: 10:30 A.M.

Participant: Pastor, Male, English and Spanish

Interview with Pastor of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: What is the name of your congregation?

Joel Tuche: *Primera Iglesia de Nazareno*, the church of the Nazarene didn't have Spanish Churches here before 1995 or 1996, there was not Nazarene denomination of Hispanic church here. I was living in Amarillo, TX in that time and a gentleman, Luis Quiñones is his name, an incredible man that I have known for long time had the vision to start Spanish churches of the Nazarene here in Kansas, so we started to travel in 1994, to Southwest Kansas to found churches in different places, then I went to Dallas to take some classes and Luis moved to live in Garden city in 1998 to fund the first church. This is why it is called First Baptist Church, they it gave it this name because it was the first of the state. From here the other congregations came to exist. There have been some, which sadly have not survived due to x reasons, but this one and the Dodge City one have survived. Dodge City is the largest one, very large and about 150 gather there. Here there were about 100 since 2001 when it was constructed and late for x reason, there was a lot of pain at the church because they lost one of their pastors in October of 2006 and the church was left with no pastor and that is when the phone rang at my house.

Many people from the first school remained in the city, but since they had a hunger for God they had to sparse out to other churches, they are here, they are participating in the Evangelism, but because of the necessity many left and so the last year has been a year of reconstruction.

K.A.: So you have been here for a year, and the church has been physically here for about?

J.T.: The church has been here for 6 years now.

K.A.: Okay, you said that your family has always been Evangelical Christian even before you moved to the United States, but when did you actually move to the United States?

J.T.: in 1991.

K.A.: and when was it that you decided to be a pastor?

J.T.: Well, I came with the purpose of being a medical doctor.

K.A.: Wow, that's a little different.

J.T.: Yeah, really different. But it was an inclination to medicine through technology. Since I was little I have been attracted to computers and everything that is engineering and I wanted, well I read that they were exploring surgery that is through computers in the 90's and I said well the United States is where one needs to go. My family all knew that I wanted and was going to be a doctor, my uncle is a doctor and I would go watch his surgeries since I was little, it was my fascination. But, after I graduated from high school...

K.A.: In Guatemala right?

J.T.: No, no, here. I came when I was 10. This helped me a lot, I was raised there. A preacher from Argentina came, don't remember his name right now, but we were in a meeting with a lot of churches in Dallas, TX and I was there because I play the piano, I know a lot about music and I have served God with music from a little age. So he said if any youth here wants to receive the call of God, come forward, and I did. My mom cried and said "Lord I brought him here to be a medical doctor, not to be a pastor because the life of a pastor is very difficult, so depending on the ministry it is very difficult. But I went forward, that was in 1993, but the devil took over me and I have a few years that were very difficult and in 1995 once again in another service I received that call from God and that is when I decided to study. At that time I was studying engineering, and I dropped it all. In fact, I was halfway through the semester and I just dropped it all. That is how I started; in 1997 I was able to actually begin what are the studies of theology

K.A.: and your studies were all in Texas?

J.T.: Yes, in the seminary in Texas, and I graduated in August of 1999, wait in May and in August I became the pastor of a church. My dad was the pastor of a church and they called me here, and I freaked out, I am only 24 years, I just graduated! I think the call I had since I was little, the first time I preached when I was 8 years old. And this has been my life; I only know a life with God, not so much in the evangelizing movement because it has changed a lot, but in

the life with God. It has changed so much, they call it actualizing, but it has been a lot of modernizing. What they do know would have freaked out those who started the work in Latin America; especially what is actualizing and that scares me. Thank God there have been those with lots of wisdom, I have tried to keep the wisdom.

K.A.: I am not sure I understand, can you give me an example?

J.T.: Well, technology within the church, this is an example that really gets it. The knowledge that I have of computers has really helped the congregations I have been at, because us Latinos work so much, too much, and we don't enjoy the technology that is here in the United States, that would make our work and our lives much easier, and Evangelizing. Like the Internet, it is something that should be used more for Evangelizing, it facilitates communication, it has a lot of benefits, and they have huge libraries of information there. Many have marked the Internet as diabolic due to a lack of knowledge. This is what I mean when I say that; here everything is visualized on the wall through use of technology. All my points are on the wall, we also need to learn how to do it and I want to use video soon. Many American churches still distribute lessons on tape and here we do it on CDs and the people are like that exists? For example, the MP3s that we have nowadays, I bought some and gave it to some of our youth, but it had the Bible on it and I told them listen, if you don't want to read then at least listen, but those MP3s have a stigma like they are listening to bad music, but it is the Bible! So that is one of the things, which is

what is actualizing. Now what is modernizing we have permitted too many expression, too much music that would have offended the past leaders. Now there exists music that would not offend that have been Christian for generations, there is still music that offers that sanctity, but there is also a loss of controls in what is the organization. They say let's just do and let's see how it comes out. There is a method of how do things, there is a way it's not just, there are a lot of sermons that talk about topics, they read a verse about the Bible and then you talk about a topic and it's not a sermon anymore. That is the one thing, they want to hear about family or things that are related with everyday life and we are walking away from, okay, this is what the Bible says and this is how we are supposed to and then you can go and apply it instead of us going out there and let's talk about it in church. Okay we have the topic of homosexuality, the topic of modernism, finances, family, how parents should parent, okay and we give them 45 minutes of what is going on out there instead of this is what the Bible says and if you do it, then you won't have to worry about what is going on out there. See that is what I am talking about when I say modernization not actualization. Because you can get those kinds of preachers anywhere the only thing that we ask as a church is that the Bible is the beginning. You need the Bible so that you can apply it out there, which is what I mean about modernization. I want to have this to be a place where we can worship God not a place where we congregate to talk about our problems and then when something good happens, chant and cheer about a

miracle, no, that is not church. That is a social group and that is what I see happening with a lot of Latino churches here in Garden City.

K.A.: You see that churches act as a social group?

J.T.: Well, I don't want to say that, because it is a rosy subject, but yes. They go there to hang out and make friends and they are not so connected with the doctrine of Bible, even the leaders. They just make it like their club that is in a church and that is not of God. I have tried to focus on the youth, to try to get them involved so that they can change this for the future.

K.A.: Do you have a lot of youth involvement here?

J.T.: Well we started with about 4 youth and I challenged them to bring more friends and then we had 10 and then I did it again, but I said that if they could bring the attendance to like 100 that I would shave my head and they did.

That's why I have no hair! I go to the schools and I talk to them because Garden City really has a gang problem. When someone meets you they ask you, 'who are you with' if you are in the other gang then without even knowing you they have become your enemy, or if you are with their friend's gang they have your back, but worse if you don't claim anyone they recruit you or scare you until you have no option, but to join. I try to get the youth here to get really involved so that they don't get involved with the gangs. I give the group that call themselves *Holy Crew* a lot of responsibility, some of them show up two hours before the service to help set up and they all play in the band and this church runs because of the youth. Some of the adults get a bit upset of all

the responsibility that they get, but I tell them, now there's 100 youth coming to our event so I tell them to get off my back and they do because they realize that the attendance is up!

K.A.: That's great, so are all the youth from Garden City?

J.T.: They come from all the surrounding areas and from other churches and some don't even speak Spanish, but they like it here and they come. At first people at the church were mad the youth events were in English, but I gave the option of deciding what they wanted and they said that it's English. Before they used to not come because some of them don't speak Spanish like their parents, some came here young or were even born here and don't have an easy time with Spanish. I want them to learn and to feel comfortable and so we do it in English.

K.A.: So the youth program is all in English and the Adult program is in Spanish?

J.T.: Yeah, well unless we have a visitor who speaks only English, then I try to translate as I go so that they get the message too, but that is rare. Usually it's all in Spanish and I try to generalize my terms.

K.A.: How many people usually attend your services?

J.T.: On Sunday mornings we get around 50-60 people that show up, but then we have a service at 6 P.M. and that's the one that most people that work can make, so we get about 70 people.

K.A.: Wow, that's great attendance.

J.T.: Yeah, well it's only like 30 adults, but you know how us Latinos come with like 4 or 5 kids so that's where most of our numbers come from.

K.A.: So you offer two Sunday services, what else do you provide?

J.T.: Well every Friday at 6 P.M. we have a youth group that meets, then we have the Wednesday Bible study group and those are really well attended, but then there is the Spanish classes for English speakers that I teach and six-week theology class that I offer that are not as well attended, but you know our church has to get educated and all the churches offer English classes, so we thought let's be different and offer Spanish classes for the Americans. They should learn about us too you know!

K.A.: That's great!

J.T.: Yeah, I just wish more people came, right now it's like a handful of people, but I guess you have to start somewhere!

K.A.: True, so thinking back to the Spanish speaking congregants, what do you think are the motivations that bring them to your church?

J.T.: Well I hope because they want a closer relationship with God, you know but I know that is not the only reason. We get a lot of the new people in town who just want to come for the food we sometimes have after the service or to try to get help, you know with money or with food. Actually that's probably how we get most people to come. They hear about us and then they show up on Sunday. I know that's why they come, they need help and they know that

we will give it to them. It's usually after a few months that you know who the ones here are for good and the ones that just needed to get settled.

K.A.: What kind of aid do you offer them?

J.T.: Well it depends on what they need. Usually it's clothes or food, we try to not give money since you never know what they are spending it on. Or sometimes its helping them find a house, or a job or to set up the cable or translating, you know getting them settled in the town. Then they make friends at the church and you see them at a lot of the events, but as soon as they get a job and make more friends there, you'll hear of them at *bailes* or Latin bars and then they start liking the worldly things and slowly stop coming to learn about God. You know it happens everywhere; at least they come and hear the word of God and later on when they realize that their lifestyle is not good they will want to come back and we will welcome them with open arms.

K.A.: That's great, so what would you say are the biggest concerns of the members of you congregation?

J.T.: Wow, that's a hard question, but I would say that it varies with everyone you know some people worry about papers or being deported, some worry about having a job or time off to spend with the family – I would say that's a really big one because our people here work hard jobs, you know feedlots or the plant and they have to work long hours and they don't get too many days to rest so as a church we worry about the people that can't come to church

because they have to work so much. And you know as a church we worry about the youth, that they stay in the path of God and that they keep participating in church. But everyone has problems and as long as they come to church they can be sure that God will solve all of them. You know also as a whole church or heck even the whole town we suffer because of a lack of information. Here's a funny story, I got a speeding ticket and went to the court house to pay it and when I was walking in the sign at the door had we don't accept checks in English and also written in Spanish and I was so embarrassed to see that it was spelled wrong and the grammar was wrong so I walked in and said to the receptionist who were Mexican, "Who translated this?" off course they all said it wasn't them but that is embarrassing and a big problem around town. Also the people just lack information in general about what Garden City can offer them, at the community college there are classes for getting your GED or for being successful in the U.S. and nobody comes. I think it's because they don't know about it, the fliers are in English, I mean come on! If you want Latinos to come then you have to let them know in the language that they speak, no!

K.A.: Yeah that would seem to make sense!

J.T.: And another thing is the Spanish newspapers. Have you read one? You know *El telegrama* or *La Semana*?

K.A.: No, I haven't.

J.T.: Well don't bother, you would be embarrassed. Just like the signs, they are written horribly. I mean what kind of message are we sending to people like you, Latinos that are educated, that we don't care? That we can't take the time to make it right? I don't know, it's just frustrating, but know I am just ranting, next question!

K.A.: No, it's great I want to know what concerns you, okay, next question: in your opinion, are there any anti-immigrant sentiments in Garden City?

J.T.: Oh YEAH! Well you know, you have lived around here. It's a huge problem, people like to act like it's not a problem, but I have seen it. Maybe it's not so out there like fighting or killings, but it's an attitude. Even at the American Nazarene Church that sponsors us, they are even Christians and they look at the Latinos like they are a little lower than they. Lots of people come to me with stories from work. Like one person said their supervisor didn't want to work on certain holidays so he would just make the Mexicans do it without asking them because he knew they would not argue. Or just the service it's different. I know that you have to look nice to be treated nice sometimes, but here even if you look nice, if you are Mexican or Latino they judge you and are impatient. Well because you know that here if you speak Spanish and have dark hair you are automatically Mexican! They don't care what's beyond Mexico; it's all the same to them. Racism happens everywhere, in Texas there was racism, but here it's worse! Cops just stop you because you're a little dark; I have seen it, heck that's how I got my ticket. But what

can we do? Right? Well I say we make them understand that we are here to stay so they better get used to it! It's going to get better with time, did you know that they elected a Latino mayor?

K.A.: No, I was not aware. That's impressive!

J.T.: Well not really, he is a fraud.

K.A.: How so?

J.T.: Okay, so we were at a meeting after he was elected and I went to see what he planned to do for Latinos and how we could help, well I thought that the congregation would really be impressed if he would make a visit to the church and say something to make them want to get more involved with the city or politics, but anyway, I asked him, so do you speak Spanish? And he said, well probably not as good as you, now there are reporters here, so then I say, well am I going to have to translate everything for you? Yes he said! Come on, seriously? And you claim to be Latino? So then I find out that his grandparents are Latinos, but it's not the same he doesn't know what the immigrants go through or what they care about, but then again you have to start somewhere.

K.A.: True!

J.T.: Anyway, that's what I think, but I am probably talking too much.

K.A.: No, I appreciate you taking the time to answer all of my questions, do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

J.T.: No, but you should go to Dodge City, there are lots of Latinos there and my dad would love to talk to you. Now there's a guy who would talk a lot! At his church it's usually in the hundreds, you could really get some insight there. But other than that I really appreciate what your doing, it's important to have Latinos and Latinas getting an education so that can speak for those who can't. So thank you.

K.A.: I really appreciate you saying that – I hope my research serves a good purpose!

J.T.: It will, so what time will you be here on Sunday or what do I do?

K.A.: I will be here in the morning so we can go over everything, is 9 A.M. okay?

J.T.: Great, maybe I'll have you help me set up!

K.A.: Hey, you are helping me a ton, I'd be happy to help wherever I can!

J.T.: I'm just kidding.

Duration of interview: 1 hour and 5 minutes.

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 12:40 P.M.
End Time: 12:45 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #1, Female, English

Interview with congregant of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: Where you born here in the United States?

Congregants: No I was born in Guatemala.

K.A.: How long ago did you come?

C: I came in 2001 from Huehuetenango, Aguacatan.

K.A.: Did you used to attend a church then?

C: Not really, I lived with my grandparents and they were old and didn't really get out much, but they were Catholic and I was baptized Catholic. My parents moved to the United States five years before I came so it was just my sister and I. They worked hard to get money and stabilized so that they bring us here.

K.A.: How often did you attend a week or a month in Guatemala?

C: I would say like 2 Sundays out of the month, but I went to a Catholic school so there was a religion class that we had that was like church.

K.A.: Would you say that you have converted to be an Evangelical Christian?

C: Yes, I have always been a Christian, but here I had a renewal of faith and I love my church.

K.A.: How often do you go to church now?

C: I go on Sundays two times, on Friday night, and Wednesday night and Monday night.

K.A.: How many hours do you spend at the church?

C: A lot. I am in the singing group so we practice a lot, like 5 hours a week, but not counting that I would say that 10 hours or 15 hours.

K.A.: Wow, so like 20 hours a week at the church?

C: Yes, at least!

K.A.: Do your parents attend this church?

C: Yes, they do. That is how I started coming here.

K.A.: What do you think motivates people to come here?

C: A need to talk to God and to grow as an individual.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the biggest concerns of the people that come to church?

C: That a lot of people don't know that they need to be saved to go to heaven.

K.A.: Do you feel that there are anti-immigrant sentiments here in Garden City?

C: Yeah, a little. I know it because I go to the high school. I am older, but since they held me back I am still there, but there are a lot of problems between the kids. They fight, usually because when we talk in Spanish they always think we are saying bad things about them when we are not!

K.A.: How about outside of school?

C: Yes, but I really only spend time in the school and at church so I don't see it.

K.A.: Well that's all I have, do you have any question or additional comments?

C: No.

Duration of interview: 5 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 12:55 P.M.
End Time: 1:00 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #2, Female, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about the church?

Congregant: I learned about it in Guatemala from my husband who was visiting from the United States, well he was not my husband then. He was on a mission trip and he told me about his church.

K.A.: Have you always been a member of an Evangelical Church?

C: No I used to be Catholic.

K.A.: When did you come to the United States?

C: In 2001.

K.A.: Before you came did you attend the Catholic Church and how often?

C: Rarely, maybe once a month.

K.A.: and now here in the U.S. how often do you go?

C: Like 3 or more times, depends on my work schedule.

K.A.: How many hours a week would you say you spend at the church?

C: I would say like 10-13 hours.

K.A.: What role would you say that religion plays in your life?

C: The church plays a big role in my life, I only hang out here. Since my husband was from here his friends were from the church, then they just became my friends. Our times here are spent in church, at home and work.

K.A.: What attracted you or what made you convert?

C: The close relationship with God.

K.A.: How about other people that attend the church?

C: I would say the same thing attracts them.

K.A.: What in your opinion concerns the congregation as a whole?

C: The nice times that we have here, we always have fun with music, good conversation and food.

K.A.: In your opinion is there anti-immigrant sentiment here?

C: No, my husband is American and we have never had a problem. We are Christian and we let people know that, so they treat us nicely. In the United States as a whole I feel like it's a problem, but not so much here.

K.A.: Thank you. Do you have any questions for me or additional comments?

C: No I don't.

Duration of Interview: 5 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 12:50 P.M.
End Time: 1:00 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #3, Male, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about this congregation?

Congregant: From friends from work right after I moved here.

K.A.: Where did you come from?

C: From Mexico in 2001.

K.A.: Have you always attended an Evangelical Church?

C: No, in Mexico I was Catholic.

K.A.: How often would you say you attended church before?

C: I would say once a month.

K.A.: and now here how often do you go?

C: I go regularly, I go when I can, my work only allows me to go on certain Sundays because they need me on Sundays.

K.A.: What attracted you to this church?

C: Well I felt something in my heart that made me understand that this was the way was the right way. Now that I come to this church I feel happy all the time and that God is part of me all of the time.

K.A.: What do you think motivates people to come here to this church?

C: I think that people come here because of the change that they see in the people; he indicates the next step in our lives. People see that and it motivates

them to feel the same and to be happy. The experienced is lived in many stages, for some it happens fast for others it takes a little longer. Just like when you are a little kid, you need your parents we need the church. For guidance and for help in time of need, so the church is like our family here. Like when I am in Mexico I have my parents and my actual family. That's what the church is for us now. They are a hand when we are in need. We take care of each other and make sure we are all checking up on each other.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the concerns of the church?

C: I would say that they are worried about immigration, for the undocumented people, and that our church grows and that our youth stay active and follow the footsteps of the Lord. Our pastor does a good job in getting them involved so that is good.

K.A.: In your opinion are there anti-immigrant sentiments here?

C: Yes racism is bad in Kansas, some say it does not exist, but they are lying. I work in a dairy in Cimarron, like 30 miles from here and my boss and supervisor are racist. They give us too much work and they pay us too little, but we can't speak up. They are not Christian people, so they don't treat everyone with the respect that they deserve. I think that people are forced to feel lower because we are Mexican. We are not, but they want us to feel this way. Its hard work, I feed the cows day and night, and it doesn't stop you have to feed them all the time, everyday and instead of hiring more people they made a few work a lot. So that is racist in my eyes. Americans don't want to do

our jobs, they want to be the managers, so they know that we don't have papers and they make us work and we do it out fear. It's sad to me to know that this exist here, but it's probably everywhere, but it makes me sad to live in this situation.

K.A.: That's all I have, do you have additional comments or questions for me?

C: Not really, sorry I like to talk a lot.

K.A.: No it's great, thanks!

Duration of Interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 1:25 P.M.
End Time: 1:35 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #4, Female, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregants: We heard about through friends right when we came and decided to take them up on the invitation.

K.A.: Where did you come from?

C: From Mexico, our family came in 2001 and decided to come to Kansas because we had friends here and they helped us make that decision.

K.A.: When you lived in Mexico, did you practice a religion?

C: Yes, Catholic.

K.A.: How often did you go to church?

C: Not often, maybe for weddings or Easter.

K.A.: Would you say that you attended once a month or once every three months?

C: No, more like two to three times a year.

K.A.: How often do you attend now?

C: About three times a week or as much as I can.

K.A.: Okay, and now what was it that you liked about this church?

C: The change that you see in your life, you are surrounded by people who believe the same, it's a nice atmosphere.

K.A.: Would you say that you have a lot of friends in the church?

C: All of them, I consider them my family.

K.A.: Do you have any family here?

C: My husband and kids, but aside from that everyone is in Mexico, well I have a cousin in California.

K.A.: When did you start coming to this church?

C: I can't remember the month exactly but in 2003.

K.A.: What role does religion play in your life?

C: Role?

K.A.: I mean does it play an important role?

C: Oh yes, it's why we stay here. We love our church and I don't think that we could find another church like it anywhere else.

K.A.: In your opinion, why do members participate in the church?

C: Well I would say that they want the same things that I wanted. Peace and love in their life.

K.A.: What, again in your opinion, are the biggest concerns in people's life?

C: Their health, their kid's health, education.

K.A.: Do you feel an anti immigrant sentiment in Garden City?

C: Yes, it's hard here, it's not like home. I will always fee like a stranger here, always.

K.A.: Can you talk a little more about that? I mean have you experienced racism?

C: Ahh no. It's not like they are throwing eggs on us, but it's a treatment. Not nice, in fact rude, and they don't think you deserve to be here we are intruders to them.

K.A.: Okay, well I know you need to get going so I won't take up anymore of your time, but do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

C: No.

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 1:35 P.M.
End Time: 1:45 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #5, Male, English

Interview with congregant of *Primera Iglesia Del Nazareno*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about this church?

Congregant: In the conceptual stages, helping set it up.

K.A.: Have you always attended a Nazarene church?

C: No, I used to be a Catholic for 10 years.

K.A.: Why did you convert?

C: I liked the personal relationship that this church provided me and the people at this church were really special.

K.A.: How did you help with the formation of this church?

C: Well I used to attend the English Nazarene Church and then we saw a need since almost 1/2 the town is Hispanics. There was a pastor that came from Texas and he led the team to get this location. Most gringos will generalize that all people are from Mexico, but the Spanish people see the difference a little better, they differentiate between the Latinos, so Mexican, Guatemalan and so on. But you have to remember that they also generalize and are guilty too, like they call anyone that is Asian, Chinese, they don't see the distinction between Filipino and Japanese or so on. Anyway, that's neither here nor there, but I wanted to join the church to be close to the Latino people, I really value the culture and I wanted to learn to speak Spanish.

K.A.: How long have you lived in Garden City?

C: All my life.

K.A.: Okay, so you have seen how the town has been transformed since the 1990s, do you feel like there is a friction that occurs between cultures?

C: In the Latino culture, in general, I have had a problem with the Mexican men, they are so macho and this has added an extra challenge for getting along with the people in Garden City. Even in this church the men are still not sure that they really accept me, it's the macho thing and that I married a Latina.

K.A.: How often do you attend this church?

C: On Wednesdays and Sundays.

K.A.: Do you understand the entire service?

C: Oh yes, it's been a year now that I can really speak it well and this has helped to be better and better friends with the people. We hang out outside of church and sometimes they will call me and say, can you help me? In the middle of winter, we haven't had the heat in our house in 3 day and it's like 20 degrees out and I am like, YES. Then I'll call the company and we get it fixed. It's nice that they use me to help them, since I speak Spanish and English so they use me when they need something done or sometimes they have their wife call my wife, the macho thing again!

K.A.: How did you meet your wife?

C: Well I went on a Mission trip to Guatemala with a group from the church, when we got there one of the Spanish pastors said, “I want to introduce you to someone” and then he introduced me to my wife there and the group abandoned us for an afternoon and we sat there not knowing each other’s languages and we knew that we trusted the other person even without being able to talk and we knew that was my friend. And so with a dictionary we were able to get about 5 sentences out that entire day and then people joined us and the rest is history, we married. But it’s not new that Latinos have come here for work, my dad used to hire them a long time ago and he used to pay them for farm work, so its been going on a long time. People go where there’s opportunity and right now that’s here.

K.A.: Do you find that Latinos are welcomed here?

C: Well, I welcome them, however, I married one so that makes me a little different right off the bat! You know before joining the church because of my wife I would say no, but now that I have seen it and heard it I see it’s a problem. They often get treated badly and don’t know their rights so they put up with it. Like I said I try to help when I can, but there’s only one of me.

K.A.: Why do you think the racism occurs?

C: Well obviously the *gringos*, and you know I don’t mean that in a derogatory way right?

K.A.: You mean *gringos*?

C: Yes, it’s like an endearing term they use.

K.A.: Okay.

C: So the *gringos* think that they are here taking the jobs, not paying taxes, ruining the town since they don't speak English and I could go on, but it all comes down to not being happy with the changes that have happened here. There are a lot of older folks that do not like change and that are not ever going to like it.

K.A.: Hmm. Well that's all the question I have, do you have any additional comments?

C: No, but thanks.

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

3. Transcribed Interviews: *Mission Bautista Del Sur*

Date: 03-08-08

Start time: 3:50 P.M.

End Time: 4:05 P.M.

Participant: Pastor, Male, Spanish

Interview with Pastor of *Mission Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How and when was your congregation formed?

Fredy Pinto: We started in August of 2003, I was part of a group in Garden City, and we were concerned for Syracuse. There are a lot of Latinos here and there were at that time no congregations, so we decided in December of 2002 that the Lord was most needed here and I was the one selected to lead the mission here. In August it was formalized and we got a permanent space.

K.A.: Now this building is in conjunction with another congregation?

F.P.: Yes, with the American Baptist Church next door, but we do not collaborate with them we are just under the same association.

K.A.: How many members do you have that attend the church?

F.P.: Regular members that are always there 10-15, but attendance is always odd. There was a time that we had 40 people, but churches have been transitioning right now. A dilemma here is that this town is transitory, people are deciding to come and go here so the churches that were here were discouraged by the lack of attendance, but people, the Mexicans are working in jobs that don't allow them to go to church.

K.A.: Are all your services offered in Spanish?

F.P.: Yes, everything, I don't speak English.

K.A.: Okay, what in your opinion motivates the members to attend your church?

F.P.: Well there are many reasons as to why a person decides to go to church, but in my opinion the people live better when they attend church, spiritually and because they get the fellowship. People just feel good when they have fellowship with others. Also Christ joins them so the relationship is stronger. A lot of people here lately have decided to have a worldly community, they only have the nights off and so they participate in activities of the night, drinking, dancing, and drugs. The people go to Johnson City or Lamar to bars because they want to have fun, but it's fun without purpose, just to feel surrounded by people at that given time.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the biggest concerns of the people in your church or of Syracuse Latinos in general?

F.P.: Well one of the biggest concerns of the people in general is our kids, their growth. What are they learning? A lot of churches are losing their youth, I think it's due to the focus on traditionalism of the church, but that's what I think, I think we need to change to attract the youth otherwise we won't survive. They need to identify with us, or we will lose them.

K.A.: What services does your church provide?

F.P.: As a church we go to the lake to relax, or we have a fellowship as part of Southwest Kansas and a lot of churches come together. There are about 10 churches that do that and it's nice.

K.A.: Do you ever provide food at your events?

F.P.: Oh yes, we all love to eat; we always have good food, especially on holidays.

K.A.: Do you guys provide services to new immigrants?

F.P.: Yes we help with what we can, with clothes, food, furniture, beds. We also offer English classes on Tuesday nights from 6-8 P.M.

K.A.: In your opinion, are there any anti-immigrant sentiments or racism that occurs here in Syracuse?

F.P.: I think that everywhere you go you will find it, but it might be getting better with time. It has to change because more and more people keep coming and eventually we will have to learn to coexist. The language is the first barrier that we must surpass. After that it might get better, but who knows. It's the people that don't attend church that have a lot of problems with Americans. It's because they do worldly things, they want our church to adapt to their times, and we can't we meet in the morning on Sundays. I know it's hard but they have to learn that Sunday is the day of rest. There are a lot of new people that come and go to our church, but then they move. I think God has a good plan for us, but it's going to take time. Lots of people say they are Christian here, but they don't take that day off to come to church. What can you do?

K.A.: Well, that's all I have, do you have additional comments or questions?

F.P.: Nope.

Duration of Interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-08-08
Start time: 3:10 P.M.
End Time: 3:45 P.M.
Participant: #1, Female, Spanish and English

Interview with Congregant of *Mission Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about the church that you attend?

Congregant: Well I started attending *Mission Bautista Del Sur*, I was invited there by my parents who used to be Catholic but then entered the Christian religion and from then on we were raised in this religion.

K.A.: Where you born?

C: In Mexico, the capital.

K.A.: When did you move to the United States?

C: I came when I was a young child, we moved to California.

K.A.: When you were in Mexico how often would you say you attended church a week?

C: Well maybe 3 times a month.

K.A.: And how much time would you spend in each visit?

C: Well not sure, it was a fundamentalist church and they were strict so we didn't like to stay long, maybe an hour at most.

K.A.: Okay, how many people attend your church on Sundays?

C: Well I would say like 20-23 people.

K.A.: Do you have services on other days?

C: Yes, on Wednesdays but a lot can't come because of work so only like 7-10 people come, depending on the hours of work.

K.A.: Outside of Sunday and Wednesday, are there other services that the church offers?

C: Well we sometimes visit people on Fridays and Mondays for visitation. I also give English classes for the community, I have like 10 students and it's just another way our church can help the Latino community and at the same time I talk to them about Christ.

K.A.: Do the people that attend your classes, do they all attend your church?

C: No a lot of them don't go, I mean the classes are in the church but they don't come to the Sunday service. They haven't wanted to, but I pray for them and remind them that the church of God is the only way to be successful; hopefully the Lord will open their eyes. I try to respect the class; I realize that even though it's a service of the church not everyone is there to be evangelized, but after class to anyone interested in hearing me I try to fit it in.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are some of the motivations for the participation of the members in your church?

C: I think that what motivates them is that they are looking for a change in their lives. Always the pressure of work and of their life everyday they see the same thing and they want to experience a change and they see something missing in their lives and they ask us how we do it and that's an in to the church, we then talk to them about Christ. So I think what they look for is a

change, a little peace in their heart and they yearn for this, but sometimes they don't know that God is the way to achieve it. So we try to help them to know the Lord.

K.A.: How long have you lived in Syracuse?

C: This Easter it will be 5 years.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the biggest concerns of the people of your church?

C: Well what concerns me the most is not so much the people within the church, but it's such a small town that people are just not stable here. They stay here a little time, they gather money and then they go back to Mexico or they move to another town. You have to have a good job or something to keep you here, roots, to stick it out, there's nothing for people to do. I would say that of 100, only 2% or even 1% stay in Syracuse. They just live here a little bit and leave, that's why the membership is up and down, and that's frustrated the other churches and why we are the only one here now. It's like a rollercoaster, and that is what worries me the most.

K.A.: Now thinking about all the Spanish congregations in Syracuse, from what you know, what occurred?

C: Well now we are the only mission, no one really knows exactly what happened, but there were two other churches. Then one of the Pastors and his wife were getting a divorce and it just became too much, so that church closed and just recently the other pastor of a church that met in the basement of the

Wesleyan church, they were Baptist too, but the pastor moved and their people started coming here, but they felt abandoned. It was good for us because they came here, but many are just fed up and have stopped going. I think that they just need to mourn the loss of their church and then they will start coming. At the end of the day we are all Christian, just didn't meet in the same building. They didn't have a lot of people at either of the churches so, maybe 10 people at each so I think the pastors got frustrated there too.

K.A.: Is there a Spanish service at the Catholic Church?

C: The Catholic Church here does not offer a Spanish service; the people that go that don't speak English, because there are like 3 or 4 just go to go to church because they don't understand. Most people are not going to church in Syracuse because of a lack of organization. They also don't always know about it, it's a relatively new church.

K.A.: Years ago there were a series of graffiti writings that said some derogatory messages to Latinos in the community, did you hear about that or has it happened again?

C: Yes I was here and I remember, and they left them there, I had to go and complain about it. The sidewalk and where the electric cables sit, like the big roll of cables. Well on the front of that it said "Go back home you beaners" it was near the parking lot that I own, they did it there because only Hispanics live. Also an old truck near there was spray painted with a similar message. So I went to the city and told that they were not here when we first came and that

the signs are new, why haven't they done anything about it? You know sandblast it or paint over it, but it had it been a wall in my house I only have a short to get rid of the vandalism, but why not the city? It is a lack of respect for the people that live in the parking lot and it makes me feel bad and I am sure it made the people that live there feel bad too, so they had to go get it off. But only because I made them, otherwise it would still be there. Now if it's an American community saying mean things to them they would not have had to call, they would have taken care of it. People in the parking lot did not speak up because they were scared, of *La migra* you know, and it wasn't until almost two weeks that I found out about it. I had to speak up, now the truck is still there, but that's private property so they say that they can't do anything about that. But from what I know even on private property you only have 48 hours to take off a vandalism, like gang signs, but in Syracuse I guess "Go back to Mexico you beaners" is not a derogatory enough term to them because it's still there.

K.A.: Do you feel the anti-immigrant in Syracuse is a problem?

C: Yes it's the same, it's a huge problem in the high school and kids complain all the time. The Spanish is a big problem and according to them it's because the motives of education, then okay we won't speak Spanish in the classroom, but when it's lunch or break time, why don't they let them speak Spanish?

Well they tell me, because I translated for some kids that got in trouble and they say that the teachers worry that they are talking about them and they say

it's respectful to speak the same language they do, but they don't. So to me that is racism, because if you have free time and you want to speak your language you should. It's one of the liberties of the United States, but that doesn't matter here in Syracuse, they just say it for their own advantage. And no one can get them to see the other side. They say it's not racism, they won't change it.

K.A.: How does the ESL program work in the school?

C: Well at least they have a program, they used videos and computer, but it's not good.

K.A.: Would you say that in the time that you have been here that the community of Syracuse has gotten larger?

C: Yes a lot bigger, mostly Hispanics coming for work in the feedlots or the dairies. They keep adding feedlots here because the people are here and that's where all the Hispanics work. Now it's rare to see an American there, I mean only as managers or something high up, they don't get into the dirty work where they pay less.

K.A.: What activities does Syracuse have to offer for these new people?

C: Well there is the bowling alley, but there is a lot of smoke there so I don't like there with my kids. You know the one time I went my kids were so out of breath, and so they always want to go, but I won't let them go, they say 2nd hand smoking is worse. But other than there are some parks, a walking trail, the movie theater but it's the same movie on Friday and Saturday and in

English so a lot of Latinos don't go. Most go to Garden City or Lamar because there's more there to offer.

K.A.: In your opinion, is there a separation between the Latinos and Americans in Syracuse?

C: Yes, for sure. I am a little different because I am bilingual so I have friends, but they don't come to my house to visit or anything like that, but we are cordial and communicate when we need. It's "hi how are you" and that's were it ends. It has a lot to do with the way the Latinos act. If they are going to be drinking outside a lot, that's what bothers them. They see peoples' junk outside and they think we are all dirty and they don't like it. But if we demonstrate to them that we can be equal or even better than them in many cases there are no problems. When I moved here my neighbors asked me if we were going to have parties or loud music. And they kept asking me many questions that concerned them, now would they have done that to an American? No way, it's because I am Mexican and so I told them that we were Christian and they were relieved, but I don't ever see them or speak to them. We are strangers on the same bloc, but I see them with other neighbors who are white, so you see.. Everyone here tries to keep the neighborhood looking nice so their yards are well kept, nice outside, no kids and sometimes I wonder if they even live there, but we are a little different. I go outside a lot, my kids run around outside with their bikes, but we try to keep it down and clean as to not bother them. When I came to this town the people that worked

at the city tried to ignore me, okay the person that used to own the parking lot would pay for everyone's water bill and that was just too much so I said not me. So I asked them to put individual meters in each space and when I asked them they said no. I was confused and then I learned that the one of the people that work in the city owns the trailer in lot 9 and they rent it out and so I was like why not? I have the right, so I said it's my property and I have the right to that if I want. So she said the law says you can't change that. Well she didn't know that I was educated and knew better so I got my way, but they got mad at me and they would not say hi to me, but I always greeted them nicely and now they are warming up a little bit. But she bothering me even after that she said you can't do that, I am not going to pay you for the water, you will have to keep paying that I am going to put it in your name. I just laughed and said you can't do that if you are putting your trailer there to rent then either your renter or you will have to pay for it, but it won't be me! She was furious and kept saying it wasn't fair, but come on! Well for anyone that didn't know their rights it would have worked, but not with me.

K.A.: Do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

C: I would say that a lot of Latinos are here, but they are having a hard time letting go of their traditions, they were born Catholic and want to raise their kids Catholic, it's hard for them to move away from the tradition they are used to. For example, there is a lady that wants to come to the church but their brothers and sisters won't let her come because they used to go to the other

church so they think of it as a rivalry. So I think that is why the attendance is down people have lost faith in the congregations, because the other two left, so they are worried that we are the same, but we are not, we are here to stay.

K.A.: Well thank you for your time.

C: Sure thing.

Duration of Interview: 35 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 3:35 P.M.
End Time: 3:50 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #2, Female, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregant: I hear about it from my husband who attended the church first, and then I decided to go.

K.A.: How long have you been attending the congregation?

C: I have been attending since it started really, I think about 4 years ago.

K.A.: Would you categorize yourself as an Evangelical Christian?

C: Well yes, but I would say Baptist too.

K.A.: Have you always been a Baptist?

C: No I got married in the Catholic Church and we were Catholic all of our lives.

K.A.: Where were you Catholic?

C: In Mexico.

K.A.: Do you still consider your self Catholic?

C: Oh no, we became Christian in 1982 or so.

K.A.: I see, when did you come to the United States?

C: We moved right around the same time, we went to California first and then moved here, to Kansas I mean, like 10 years ago.

K.A.: How often did you go to church when you lived in Mexico?

C: We went to mass every Sunday.

K.A.: So once a week, but for how long, in terms of hours?

C: Oh, one hour or so, that's about how long mass takes from beginning to end, but they offer it at different times so we went when we had time available usually in the morning to get it out of the way.

K.A.: I see, and how often do you go now?

C: Now I go to church a lot.

K.A.: About how many times a week?

C: Well at least three times because we go to church on Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday every week.

K.A.: About how many hours in the week would you say that you spend doing church activities?

C: Well it really depends on the week, sometimes they have special events and we do more or sometimes it's just the three services that we go to so.

K.A.: Well how about an average?

C: Okay well then like 7-8 hours a week at least.

K.A.: What role would you say the church plays in your life?

C: Huh? I don't understand what you mean.

K.A.: Would you say that church and church services plays a big or important role in your life or not?

C: Oh, yes, it plays a very big role in my life. Especially now that we go in Syracuse. I love my church and my brothers and sisters of the church they are

like my family here and I trust them and would help them with anything they needed. Syracuse is a small town and we have a group of friends that we know are good people here in the church.

K.A.: Where did you go in the past?

C: We used to drive to Garden City and go to a Baptist church there because there were no Spanish churches in Syracuse. The pastor here was from the church in Garden City so the prayer and atmosphere is the same, just less people, but that's nice because you get to know everyone better and the relationships are stronger.

K.A.: What sort of services does the church offer for the members?

C: They offer classes for kids and events for the family.

K.A.: Do they have services for recently arrived immigrants?

C: I know they give them food if they need it or money if it's a really bad situation. Oh they also offer English classes if you want to learn, but that's not just for the church people other people go there for that too.

K.A.: Okay, now thinking of the town of Syracuse as a whole. Would you say that there exists an anti-immigrant sentiment?

C: That's a hard question because it does happen. There are a lot of people that don't want us here. Look I'll tell you that I wanted to go back to California because at least there is more of us there and they don't mess with us, but my husband said no.

K.A.: Why not?

C: We were worried about the kids and gangs and he has a good job here that provides us with enough to take care of our family.

K.A.: Can you talk a little more about why you don't like the way you are treated here?

C: Well it's a little town, tiny, everyone knows everyone and not by name, but we recognize faces. People treat you differently if you are Latino because they don't think that you deserve to be here. It's their country and we are invaders. They think that we are all illegals and that we have tons of kids and that all we do is live off the government, but that's not true. I have a lot of kids but I keep them all clean and well fed, I never have used the government. I don't do anything in this town because there is nothing to do and because if you go to the movies, it's bad service or at a restaurant they don't even care to fill your water, it's little things like that. If we do anything fun it's with our church friends and it's a dinner at a house or at the church or we will get together with the other churches at like a park or lake, but not here.

K.A.: Can you give me an example of a time when you felt racism?

C: Well this is my husband, but I was there. You know how we are sister churches with the English Baptist church right?

K.A.: Yes, but you don't meet in the same building right?

C: Right we are just sister churches, they have their church and we have ours, but we are both Baptist.

K.A.: Yes.

C: Well one time we were meeting in this little house in between the churches, they have a little kitchen there so a lot of our social events are there so that we can warm up the food. Well on this day when we were cleaning up the pastor from the American church was there so he could lock up and he was talking to my husband. You know because he speaks good English, well he was telling the pastor about how we are going to go to Mexico to visit his mom for a week and the pastor asked him if flights were expensive and my husband told him that we drive because it cost less since there is so many of us there. So jokingly my husband said, “why you want to give us money” and the pastor said, “I would, but only if you promised to stay there and not to come back!”

K.A.: Excuse me? Really!

C: Yes. It’s sad that even the pastor is racist, we just laughed it off and forgot about it, but my husband deep inside was hurt, this is supposed to be a man of God. So you can just imagine what the other people are like. I just worry that I am good with God and the people that hold their head up high and think that their jaw is made of gold will be sentenced on judgment day. You know, it’s not like I have the language mastered that I can say something or that they would listen – you see when you trust God and you are strong in your faith the things that you can’t stand up for your self on, God will take care of those later. They won’t go unpunished.

K.A.: I don’t have any more questions, do you have any comments or questions for me?

C: When will you get this done?

K.A.: Well the goal is in the next two months so that I can graduate in May.

C: Ahh, well good luck!

K.A.: Thanks!

Duration of interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 3:50 P.M.
End Time: 4:00 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #3, Male, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregant: Well the mission in Syracuse was started as a result of a conversation that happened at *La Primera Iglesia Bautista* in Garden City. People of Syracuse, us and another family gave testimony and expressed the need for a mission in Syracuse. The town is small and there are lots of Mexicans here, but no church. So we identified a need for God, a Godless community is a potential for menace and we were successful in finding a pastor willing to take on the task.

K.A.: I see, and when was it that you started attending the church in Syracuse?

C: Right when it started in 2003.

K.A.: Have you always attended a Evangelical Christian Church?

C: No.

K.A.: What church did you attend in the past?

C: I went to a Catholic church but because I was raised Catholic not because I made the decision to be Catholic.

K.A.: I see, so did it play an important role in your life?

C: Well not really, it was tradition, but I didn't feel the spiritual connection that I feel now. They were not mandated by God, I don't know if you have been to a Catholic church, but it's not honest. It's not the word of God. They don't have the energy and conviction that we do. They don't even use the Bible. Theirs is a man made religion to follow man's rules, ours is a religion to follow God's rules. See the difference?

K.A.: I see, and how often did you go to church?

C: Not very often, not religiously just rarely when we didn't have a lot to do or needed to pray about something. See and that's a difference too, Catholics pray when they need something and that's it ~ it's a convenient relationship. We are thankful everyday and worship everyday and he reward's us with his love and protection.

K.A.: How often do you go to church now?

C: Here I go to church many times a week; we were part of the group that requested the congregation so we come to all of the events they offer.

K.A.: How many times a week, and how many hours would you say that you spend in church activities a week?

C: Ahh, like 4 times a week and of that four times maybe like three hours each time or four depends on the activity, we stay to clean up a lot of times.

K.A.: So you would say like 12-15 hours a week.

C: Yes, at least about that much.

K.A.: Do other people in your church participate as much as you and your family?

C: There's a few others, but we only have like 20 people come so we are a small group to begin with. If a family decides to not show up then the church looks even emptier than it does when we have a full house.

K.A.: But aren't there a lot of Latinos in this town?

C: Yes, that's why we started the ministry, but a lot of people aren't attending lately. They did at one point, we had days when 50 people would come, but now they have friends and they go out in Colorado or other places and they don't need the church. Later when they are remorseful of what they have done they will see the Lord and his love.

K.A.: What would you say motivates people to participate in the church?

C: I would say that they feel mandated by the Lord and it comes to all of us, but the time varies, some have to wait until they are dying in bed, others are enlightened earlier.

K.A.: Now, thinking of the town as a whole would you say that you feel that immigrants and/or Latinos are welcomed in your town?

C: It's a conflict here. I think it's a conflict anywhere lots of cultures blend, but here it's easier to see since it's so small.

K.A.: How is it a conflict here?

C: Well you know, you have lived here before. We are disrespected with looks, graffiti, they don't value our culture, and they generalize and think that we are all dirty, alcoholics.

K.A.: Do you feel that there is a separation that occurs between the towns, so that there is a Latino community and an American community and they don't intermix?

C: Well yes and no. There is interaction in the jobs and stores and most public places, but it's not a good interaction. In the jobs the Americans are the supervisors, in the stores they are the managers and they are always in positions to abuse their power. The interaction is not in the social life, obviously.

K.A.: Why is the interaction not in the social life?

C: Well because of the culture. We don't have the same language; we don't have the same food, traditions and so on.

K.A.: Okay, well that's all I have for questions. Do you have additional comments or questions for me?

C: No, but if I do later I have your number.

K.A.: Okay, sounds good, thanks so much!

Duration of interview: 10 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 4:20 P.M.
End Time: 4:35 P.M.

Participant: Congregant #4, Female, Spanish and English

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregant: I heard about it from friends, my husband is friends with the pastor.

K.A.: Have you always attended a similar congregation, I mean an Evangelical congregation?

C: Always.

K.A.: Even before you moved to the United States?

C: Yes, in Mexico we were very religious and we moved to California first and didn't go to church very often there because we didn't find one that we really liked a lot, but we still studied the Bible and prayed at home. Then when we moved here we were really happy that there was a church that we liked.

K.A.: When did you move to the United States?

C: We moved about 5 1/2 -6 years ago.

K.A.: How important is religion in your life now?

C: Very important.

K.A.: Has it always been as important or do you feel that it is more important now?

C: It is more important now, I go more often and I want my daughter to follow the word of God. I mean I have always gone to church and it's always been important, but now that we live in Syracuse it's even more important because I am growing everyday in my faith and the people of the church are now my family. We pray together, we eat together, we even cry together; they are all we have here.

K.A.: How often do you go to church now?

C: I go about 2 times a week, I would go more, but I work and one of us has to take care of our daughter.

K.A.: How often did you go before?

C: About every Sunday, but sometimes I missed.

K.A.: Would you say that most of your social friends now are from the church or only part of your friends or none?

C: No, all of my friends are from the church; I only like to surround myself around Christian people.

K.A.: Okay, in your opinion, what are some of the reasons people decide to go to your church?

C: To be stronger in their faith, because it's a good lifestyle, if you are in trouble God can help you.

K.A.: Okay, what, again in your opinion, are some of the biggest concerns that people in the congregation have?

C: I would say communicating with people. We, well a lot of them don't speak English and when they need something they don't know how to get it, I try to help because I did some school here so I can speak well, but that's their biggest concern.

K.A.: Thinking of your experience overall in Syracuse, do you feel that there exists an anti-immigrant sentiment?

C: I honestly haven't, I have heard that it exists, but I haven't experienced it.

K.A.: Do you feel that your experience is unique?

C: Well it must be because a lot of people talk about the racism in our town, but I don't feel it, but I also don't go out of my house a lot. I work cleaning and outside of going to church or grocery shopping I don't go places where I would experience it.

K.A.: Okay, well that's all I have. Thanks so much for your time! Do you have any additional comments or questions for me?

C: Ahh, not really, just that it was nice to talk to you!

K.A.: Thanks, you too!

Duration of interview: 15 minutes

Date: 03-09-08
Start time: 4:45 P.M.
End Time: 4:50 P.M.
Participant: Congregant #5, Male, Spanish

Interview with congregant of *Iglesia Bautista Del Sur*

Katherine Acosta: How did you learn about your congregation?

Congregant: Well I know the pastor of this church since the 1990s.

K.A.: And how did you meet him?

C: From California before he moved here.

K.A.: Okay, and have you always attended an Evangelical Church?

C: Well when I was little one side of my family was Christian and the other was Catholic, but that was because of my parents. I didn't claim any religion, I usually went to church for holidays if my family made me or special occasions like weddings or baptisms.

K.A.: When did you start going to an Evangelical Church?

C: I would say around 1996.

K.A.: When did you move to the United States?

C: I moved when I was 18 years old with my family.

K.A.: From where?

C: Guatemala.

K.A.: What year was that?

C: It was around 1995 or probably closer to 1996.

K.A.: How often do you go to church at your current church?

C: Well here I go every Sunday and every once in a while on Wednesdays.

K.A.: How important is church in your life now, very important, important or not important?

C: Very important.

K.A.: Would you say most, part, or none of your friends are members of the church you attend?

C: Most go to the church. I work a lot right now and I don't have time, I go home to be with the family and we do church activities as much as we can, but as far as socializing it's with the church and not with others, but mostly because there's no time.

K.A.: In your opinion, why do people participate in church?

C: Well I would say I joined the church to have an encounter with God, to praise him, to receive the Bible in word, but also to experience the community of God.

K.A.: The community of God? What is this?

C: The people of the church that you can trust.

K.A.: In your opinion, what are the biggest concerns of the members of the church?

C: Their spiritual growth and money and work, those are obvious ones.

K.A.: Work?

C: Yes, People here, me included, work really hard. Sometimes I get up so tired on Sunday and I don't have the energy to go to church, Sunday is my

only day of rest. But I know that the Lord gives me the strength and I get up, but I think a lot of people that have not been coming are not coming because of all the work.

K.A.: How many people used to come?

C: I don't know exact numbers, but it was a lot more and now it's down to a few families. And even with the other church closing, it's not like they are going there, they are not coming because work makes them tired and that's a huge concern.

K.A.: In your opinion, does racism occur in the town of Syracuse?

C: I don't think it's racism, but there is this sense that the natives feel the Latinos are only concerned making money to send home and that we are not invested in making the U.S. a better place. But I feel that the longer we stay here the better the situation will get, the more we get to know each other the less and less that people will blame things on racism.

K.A.: Well that's it. I appreciate your time, do you have additional comments or questions for me?

C: Well it was nice to meet you. You live here?

K.A.: No, I'm just visiting to complete my research. My parents live in the area, but I live in Kansas city.

C: Okay.

Duration of interview: 5 minutes

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